

University of Alberta

From *Mädel* to *Mutter* –

National Socialist School Readers and the Ideal Woman

by

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To my Mother
ESTHER A. WATTS

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2

I. Aim of Thesis

The notion that motherhood is political is by no means foreign to the present-day ear. Governments in nations such as China and India are particularly active in administering state policies that affect the lives of countless women.¹ Yet it is little more than seventy years ago when what is arguably the greatest state-organized pro-motherhood campaign the world had or has ever seen began in Nazi Germany. Far from simply remaining the underdeveloped brainchild of those in charge, German women for the most part relinquished the *ich* for the *uns*, effectively deleting any semblance of individuality for the sake of the *Volk*.



For women, being part of the *Volk* was equated with fulfilling what was deemed their 'natural,' 'traditional,' even 'sacred' role – having children. Despite the homage Nazi leaders paid to women with large families running a home marked by efficiency, care, and warmth, 'Aryan' women were not praised simply for what they did and who they were, but were praised for what they could be – reproducers of the 'pure blood' of the *Volk*. In addition to the preservation of the 'Aryan race,' Adolf Hitler (1889-1945) and his henchmen sought to use the overglorification of women's reproductive capabilities for several other purposes. Of particular importance was the need to answer conservatives' cries concerning the New Woman of the Weimar period. Bearing children put women back in the home and away from the male-dominated public sphere, providing a sense of traditional stability to an unstable society. At the same time, a

¹ See for details: G. Narayana and John F. Kantner, *Doing the Needful. The Dilemma of India's Population Policy* (Boulder: Westview, 1992). and Thomas Scharping, *Birth Control in China 1949-2000. Population policy and demographic development* (London and New York: Routledge Curzon, 2003).

glorification of motherhood satisfied a much darker side of Nazi thought. By promoting a resurgence of morality and tradition in society, the Nazis were able to use motherhood and all the tradition it stood for as an idyllic cover for Nazism's characteristic male-dominated brutality and genocide. In other words, the 'presentable' side of Nazism was used to make the 'unpresentable' side bearable.

A tremendous amount of research into National Socialism has already been carried out, including numerous studies on women in the Third Reich. Central to any discussion regarding women in Nazi Germany is the question of whether Nazism was 'modern' or 'reactionary.' Scholars such as David Schoenbaum argue that Nazism had to employ modernity to appear anti-modern,² while others such as Ralf Dahrendorf prefer the view that Nazism was neither entirely 'modern' nor entirely 'reactionary,' but that a disparity existed – Nazi *ideology* was reactionary, but Nazi *policy* was modern.³ The contrast between Nazi ideology and practice has also been noted by Ute Frevert, who describes Nazism as a "confluence of 'modernist' and 'traditionalist' tendencies."⁴ Renate Wiggershaus and Rita Thalmann hold a less conciliatory view, claiming that Nazism thoroughly degraded women,⁵ while Sebastian Haffner insists that Nazi policy contributed a great deal toward women's liberation.⁶

² David Schoenbaum, *Hitler's Social Revolution: Class and Status in Nazi Germany, 1933-1939* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1966) 276.

³ Ralf Dahrendorf, *Society and Democracy in Germany* (New York: Doubleday, 1967).

⁴ Ute Frevert, *Women in German History: From Bourgeois Emancipation to Sexual Liberation*, trans. Stuart McKinnon-Evans (Oxford: Berg, 1988) 250.

⁵ Rita Thalmann, *Frausein im Dritten Reich* (Munich: Carl Hanser, 1984) and Renate Wiggershaus, *Frauen unterm Nationalsozialismus* (Wuppertal: Peter Hammer, 1984) 5.

⁶ Sebastian Haffner, *The Meaning of Hitler* (New York: Macmillan, 1979) 36.

Policy aside, several prominent authors have provided extensive accounts of women in the Third Reich. Jill Stephenson led the discussion with her work *Women in Nazi Germany*.⁷ A second major contribution has been provided by Claudia Koonz, whose work *Mothers in the Fatherland* created quite a stir by insisting that women should not be excused from responsibility for things such as the notorious Nazi-run concentration camps. She maintains that women shared an equal guilt because of the stability they provided – by playing the supportive wife and happy mother, women freed men to carry on the terror, violence, and mass murder without having to think of themselves as inhuman.⁸ Adelheid von Saldern contends that things were not as black and white as Koonz would portray. According to her, most women did not completely fit the bill of perpetrator or victim, but rather that the blurring of lines between the public and private spheres under Nazi rule permitted women to exhibit characteristics of both extremes.⁹ Gisela Bock provides a highly interesting argument rejecting both Koonz's and von Saldern's assertions. Based on involuntary abortion and sterilization statistics, she claims that Nazism was neither pro- nor antifeminist, but that the primary issue at stake should be Nazi racism.¹⁰

Despite the evident differences of opinion, it is essential to keep the following at the forefront: to carry out their dream of *Gleichschaltung* (synchronization), the Nazis required women to act as mothers in order to ensure the continuity of the 'Aryan race.'

⁷ Jill Stephenson, *Women in Nazi Society* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1975).

⁸ Claudia Koonz, *Mothers in the Fatherland* (New York: St. Martin's, 1987).

⁹ Adelheid von Saldern, "Victims or Perpetrators? Controversies about the Role of Women in the Nazi State," *Nazism and German Society, 1933-1945*, ed. David F. Crew (London: Routledge 1994).

¹⁰ Gisela Bock, "Racism and Sexism in Nazi Germany: Motherhood, Compulsory Sterilization, and the State," *Signs* 8.3 (Spring 1983): 403.

The question is, how exactly did they expect to do this? Attempting to force people into supporting their ideology was one option, yet a more reasonable approach existed along another line – the use of propaganda. Propaganda aimed at adults has been the subject of various studies,¹¹ yet the *Reichsminister* of Propaganda Joseph Goebbels also saw a ripe prospect in a much younger crowd, namely in school children. A surefire mechanism for winning youngsters to Nazism was required, not only for the shorter term goals such as acquiring *Lebensraum* and ridding German soil of Jews and other ‘undesirables,’ but also for the long-term security of the ‘Aryan race.’ Mass, state-organized socialization of children began almost as soon as the Nazis gained political power. While boys were bombarded with propaganda stressing the worthiness of becoming a soldier, girls faced a different barrage – their reason for existence, so they were told, was in their capacity to be mothers for the *Volk*. The primary tool by which Nazi leaders could disseminate their ideology to children was the school reader. Used in each year of grade school, the school reader for *Volksschulen* provided an efficient and effective means for socializing even the youngest children, with graduating classes of loyal National Socialists constituting the desired end result.

In effect this study picks up where Lisa Pine left off in her chapter “Education and Socialization: Imbuing German Society with Nazi Family Ideals.”¹² Acknowledging school readers were “unmistakable as vehicles of Nazi doctrine,”¹³ Pine cites various examples of texts for children laden with propaganda on the elevation of motherhood,

¹¹For example, see the collection of articles in: David Welch, ed., *Nazi Propaganda: The Power and the Limitations* (London and Canberra: Croon Helm, 1983).

¹²Lisa Pine, *Nazi Family Policy 1933-1945* (Oxford: Berg, 1997) 47-87.

¹³Pine, *Nazi* 70.

noting that even the most innocent of poems about mothers and families carried political undercurrents and that "the choice of words used to describe each family member accorded exactly to Nazi ideals."¹⁴ An investigation of motherhood in the Third Reich and Nazi efforts to socialize girls into accepting a life in the private sphere will be conducted, providing a framework for the main focus of this study – an examination of the special role of literary texts in the process of socialization under the National Socialist dictatorship. Samples of texts found in school readers and school magazines will be utilized to demonstrate the various text-based methods by which girls were directed into accepting a role as mothers in the private sphere. This will not only result in a better understanding of how text selection can be (ab)used by the state to serve its own ends, but will also result in a clearer picture of what the Nazis considered an 'ideal woman.'

This investigation is certainly not intended to belittle motherhood, nor has it been selected because I find the study of children's literature simplistic. On the contrary, the weight of such a study is made clear when one considers the words of Adolf Hitler concerning the socialization of children: "When an opponent says, 'I will not come over to your side', I calmly say, 'Your child belongs to us already You will pass on. Your descendants, however, now stand in the new camp. In a short time they will know nothing else but this new community.'"¹⁵ The fact that the socialization of children was considered both desirable and imperative to the Nazis leaves no doubt as to the care and deliberation with which Nazi authors constructed the content of readers. With this

¹⁴Pine, *Nazi* 63-64.

¹⁵Quoted in Pine, *Nazi* 57-58.

in mind, this study aims at a better understanding what Nazi authors defined as a woman's role, and to thereby illuminate the social value and ideological role of school reader content.

II. Socio-historical Background of Motherhood Prior to 1933

A. Pre-modern and Early Modern

Before commencing an investigation of texts for children and the portrayal of motherhood found therein, it is important to review the broader context in which the development of the 'ideal mother' took place.

In pre-modern society, the *Hausmutter* held primary responsibility for home- and childcare. Thus the notion that such a role is 'natural' or 'traditional' to women is not entirely without substance. Law and custom may have recognized the man as head of the home, but men and women were dependent upon one another for running the home, raising the children, and making a living.¹⁶

This mutual dependability and relatively equal coexistence was shattered come bourgeois industrialization. As cottage industries disappeared and urbanization gathered steam, public and private spheres took shape and were polarized. Men left the home to make a living for their families while women stayed by the hearth. A clear line was drawn between paid labor outside of the home and unpaid, family-related labor inside the home – a fallout of modernization whose effect remains in place today. The social status of housework withered in the face of gainful employment, particularly as society sought a rise in living standards during the latter half of the 19th century. Women were confronted with the challenge to do more and more with less and less in terms of material goods, all the while having to embody morality and virtue to counter the

¹⁶Frevert 310-11.

'worldliness' their spouses encountered in the workplace. Ute Frevert provides an excellent picture of what women faced in a newly modernized society:

Women of all classes came under pressure to step up their domestic efforts and administer to their family's needs in a more rational way. They were burdened with more and more responsibility, yet they were not personally provided with the economic means to do the job. Doctors, the clergy, industrialists and politicians all opined that wifely virtues would determine whether a man turned into a drunkard or a reliable worker; that a family's health depended on the domestic skills of the mother; that her care decided whether a baby survived or not; that her educational aptitude and the love and attention she lavished on her children would have a decisive impact on their future careers.¹⁷

The area of Europe now defined as Germany was certainly no exception to industrialization and the development of distinct public and private spheres, nor to the above-cited difficulties and the generalization that a woman's life consists solely in her family. Long before the Nazis seized power, one of Germany's finest philosophers claimed that a woman's 'substantive destiny' is fulfilled only by the family.¹⁸ Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831) was by no means alone in his assertion. In fact, the *Allgemeine Landrecht* (Prussian Civil Code) of 1794, while not specifically mentioning 'substantive destiny,' declared the primary purpose of marriage to be "the

¹⁷Frevert 311.

¹⁸Frevert 312.

procreation and raising of children."¹⁹ The fate of women as maintainers of the private sphere was thus sealed and legally based.

Needless to say, some women chose to question whether mindlessly bearing children and doing housework was a sufficient way of life in itself. While Germany lacked a more radical voice on behalf of women such as France's George Sand (1804-76), the mid-nineteenth century saw the rise of a pioneer in Luise Otto-Peters (1819-95). Disturbed by the number of young women marrying solely for economic reasons (i.e. their families could or would no longer support them, and they were unable to provide for themselves), she proposed to provide young women with work as teachers and in commerce as a means of self-support prior to marriage. Otto-Peters' cry was one of many which culminated in the revolution of 1848 – a revolution whose aim was not one of emancipation as such, but one of insistence that women be better equipped to operate in the private sphere. This was to be achieved primarily through a broadening of education for girls (i.e. to include subjects other than needlework, art, music, and languages), resulting in young women who were able to contribute to the public sphere, to run their homes more efficiently, and to raise their children to become responsible citizens more effectively.²⁰

It was not until the latter half of the nineteenth century that Germany heard more radical cries for the equality of men and women. One of the more prominent voices was that of Hedwig Dohm (1833-1919), whose experiences during the revolution of 1848 led

¹⁹Frevert 314.

²⁰Frevert 76.

her to become a revolutionary herself.²¹ The first work in which she challenged patriarchal dogmas was "Was die Pastoren von den Frauen denken. Zur Frauenfrage, von Philipp von Nathusius und Herrn Professor der Theologie Jacobi in Königsberg," which appeared in 1872. Other major works included "Die Antifeministen. Ein Buch der Verteidigung" (1902), "Die Mütter. Beitrag zur Erziehungsfrage" (1903), and "Die Erziehung zum Stimmrecht der Frau" (1909). Dohm ardently opposed the exclusion of women from science and politics, yet her opposition did not culminate in an overt, public outcry – "sie engagierte sich sehr wohl in und für die Frauenbewegung, aber trat doch nie in der Öffentlichkeit auf."²² Instead, it was women such as the zealous Clara Zetkin (1857-1933) who unabashedly expressed their views in public. An instrumental voice in the women's movement of the nineteenth century, Zetkin first publicized her views at the 1889 International Workers' Congress. She argued that the Woman's Question was closely connected with the Social Question, and that women could gain equality with men only by working side by side with them outside of the home.²³

B. World War One and the Weimar Years

The nineteenth century was the starting point for women's entrance into the public sphere, but the first considerable shift in women's history following industrialization went hand in hand with the First World War. As men marched off to war, German women were required to continue their roles in the private sphere while also filling gaps

²¹Ute Gerhard, *Unerhört. Die Geschichte der deutschen Frauenbewegung* (Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1990) 104.

²²Gerhard 107.

²³Gerhard 187-89.

left by men in the public sphere. The distinctions between genders and the polarization of roles defined as 'masculine' or 'feminine' had been apparent since the nineteenth century, but the First World War brought with it an augmentation of these contrasts. Ute Daniel describes the gender-specific functions filled by men and women in times of war as follows: "'Man' was identical with 'soldier,' 'woman' was identical with 'what the soldier defends' and 'who takes care of the soldier,' as well as with 'who supports the soldier's relatives.'"²⁴ The female function was extended during World War One to include an equation of 'woman' as one "'who supplies the soldier with ammunition.'"²⁵ The entrance of women into ammunition factories – and into any other type of employment considered 'men's work' – was novel, particularly in heavy industry, commerce and the service sector. This is not to say that all women were suddenly employed in factories or offices – wartime cottage industries were also very important, particularly industries such as sewing for the army.²⁶

Opinions regarding the role of women in the workplace were mixed. On the one hand stood conservatives such as Helene Lange (1848-1930), founder of the *Allgemeine Deutsche Lehrerinnenverein* (General German Association of Women Teachers). Though a strong advocate of education for women, she argued in a speech before the Congress of the Union of German Women Teachers (1915) that emancipation could be achieved only through the acceptance by women of their natural tasks as females,

²⁴Ute Daniel, *The War From Within: German Working-Class Women in the First World War*, trans. Margaret Ries (Oxford: Berg 1997) 22.

²⁵Daniel 22.

²⁶Daniel 96.

namely motherhood and the preservation of the traditional family structure.²⁷ In other words, the emancipatory step of working in the public sphere held no true promise of freedom for women – the war deemed their participation in the workforce necessary and a temporary act of sacrifice for their nation.

A more liberal stance than that of Lange can be found in Magda Trott (1880-1945), an affiliate of Germany's *Nationalliberale Partei*. Prior to 1914, the professional woman's day consisted by and large of stenography, typing, and bookkeeping. Many women failed at their first attempt to take on a share of the public sphere equal to any man's – a fact pounced on by conservatives and those threatened by the entrance of women into the public sphere. Trott acknowledged this, but argued that the stumblings and failures of some women were due more to a lack of education than to lack of aptitude – the educational reforms achieved following the 1848 revolution had resulted in increased numbers of and accessibility to secondary schools for girls, yet the reforms neither went so far as to provide women with sufficient post-secondary education nor prepared them for a sudden hand-over of the reins during times of national emergency.²⁸

Regardless of differing stances on women in the workforce, the entrance of women into the public sphere greatly impacted the private sphere. Time spent in a munitions factory, in an office, or on a farm was less time spent at home doing

²⁷ Helene Lange, "Speech before the Congress of the Union of German Women Teachers," *World War One and European Society: A Sourcebook*, eds. Frans Coetzee and Marilyn Shevin-Coetzee (Lexington and Toronto: DC Heath, 1995) 172-174.

²⁸ Magda Trott, "Frauenarbeit, ein Ersatz für Männerarbeit?" *World War One and European Society: A Sourcebook*, eds. Frans Coetzee and Marilyn Schevin-Coetzee (Lexington and Toronto: DC Heath, 1995) 174-75.

housework and looking after children. The pressure faced by women to fill 'men's' roles effectively with little or no training was made worse by increased criticism of housewives' levels of domestic efficiency. Food shortages and a general lack of consumer goods during the war proved difficult for the average woman. To prevent mass starvation, women needed to be educated as to how best to handle the acute shortages. The *Verband Deutscher Hausfrauen* (Association of German Housewives), along with other women's organizations and civil authorities, initiated training courses, cooking demonstrations, and saw to the publication and distribution of the *Hauswirtschaftliche Korrespondenz* with the aim of educating housewives as to the importance and methods of household efficiency.²⁹ The organization of such activities and publications did not signify an increased status of the woman's sphere, but rather succeeded in characterizing housewives (particularly those of the working class) as being chronically underqualified to operate within it.³⁰

Traditional family structure also came under fire, not without an effect on motherhood. Male conscription resulted in a substantial drop of marriages per year – prior to World War One, an average of 8 per 1,000 inhabitants were wed each year, but this rate dropped by roughly fifty percent during the war.³¹ In addition to a drop in marriage rates, a severe drop in birth rates also occurred from 1914 to 1918 amounting to a statistical loss of approximately 2.2 million newborns over four years.³² However, conscription was the most significant factor in creating a social vacuum. Until

²⁹Daniel 193.

³⁰Daniel 291-292.

³¹Daniel 131.

³²Daniel 134.

mass conscription families had depended upon a patriarchal authority that had been wrested from them without warning.³³ Mothers suddenly had to continue their usual activities in the private sphere, take up the reins in the public sphere, and somehow also fill a patriarchal void in family life. State officials realized the relative impossibility of the three-way task and undoubtedly – although without saying so – could not bear the thought of women filling positions of authority in the family any more than in the workforce. Thus the socialization of children was taken on by the state. The broad term ‘wayward’ was applied without exception to working-class youths, regardless of whether they were ‘wayward’ or not,³⁴ and the state set about enforcing measures such as mandatory savings, curfews and a ban on going to the cinema.³⁵ This state takeover of socialization may have been intended to ease the load parenting women faced, but it also resulted in women being portrayed as incapable of raising children to responsible young adults. Thus women in the First World War suffered a triad of criticism, not to mention a severe lack of appreciation for their efforts – not only were they portrayed as underqualified housewives and underqualified employees, as previously discussed, but they also came to be characterized as underqualified parents.

The end of World War One did not spell a sudden return to ‘normal’ family life, nor a return to motherhood as it had been prior to the war. Instead, an overriding sense of instability developed where women were concerned. The First World War had resulted in many changes for women, including the development of a new perspective on

³³Pine, *Nazi* 5.

³⁴Daniel 164.

³⁵Daniel 153.

motherhood. Women had gained experience in the public sphere in addition to having to handle the day-to-day psychological and physical demands of holding up the home front. They had also experienced a state invasion of the private sphere as authorities attempted to control their children via policy, and they had seen their nation fall.

On the one hand, progress was achieved with the Weimar Constitution of 1919, which guaranteed women suffrage and equal opportunity of the sexes. The implementation of such a policy was, however, another matter. Women were still considered primary operators of the private sphere, and any attempt to take on the public sphere automatically resulted in some neglect of other 'duties' at home. While difficulties handling the delicate balance between commitment to both spheres may have been overlooked from 1914 to 1918 out of necessity, the return of men following the war created a whole new set of expectations for women. Tired, disillusioned, defeated men, many of whom had become strangers to their former selves, returned from the front expecting to find their jobs, wives, mothers, and girlfriends unchanged. They were likely not expecting to find their female counterparts as displaced as they were, which made the transition from war to peace even more difficult.

The war produced experiences and images of horror that intensified male demands for the soothing and procreative qualities they expected of women. Indeed, the war had widened the gap between women and men, who had experienced it so differently. Men continued to cherish the peculiar camaraderie of the trenches, and a 'stab in the back' legend grew. According to this myth, the war was lost on the home front, rather

than by the army, because of subversion by Jews, Communists, Social Democrats – and also women. Demobilization removed thousands of women from their wartime jobs and retracked others into lower paying ‘female’ areas. By creating unemployment and job competition, demobilization intensified the antagonism between the sexes. Furthermore, fears of demographic disaster followed the sky-rocketing ‘homecoming divorces’ and the perception that many ‘surplus’ women, denied husbands by the slaughter of war, would not produce babies to replace a lost generation. In spite of these tensions, women were expected to bind the nation’s wounds with their nurturing qualities. They had to mediate men’s re-entry into the family and work.³⁶

The various tensions between men and women were not the only challenge to ‘traditional’ family life in Weimar Germany. The *Reichsbund der Kinderreichen* (RdK – National League of Large Families) was formed in the aftermath of World War One. Of primary importance to organizations was the issue of *Volkstod* (death of the nation) in both quantitative and qualitative terms.³⁷ Similar organizations such as the *Bund für Mutterschutz und Sexualreform* founded in 1905 by Helene Stöcker (1869-1943), the *Liga für Mutterschutz und soziale Hygiene* and the *Reichsverband für Geburtenregelung und Sexualhygiene* were set up as family planning centers, with fifteen such centers operating in Germany by 1932.³⁸ In addition to educating Germans on the topic of

³⁶Renate Bridenthal, Atina Grossmann, and Marion Kaplan, “Introduction,” *When Biology Became Destiny. Women in Weimar and Nazi Germany* (New York: Monthly Review, 1984) 6-7.

³⁷Pine, *Nazi* 88.

³⁸Pine, *Nazi* 90.

contraception, counseling centers sought to "encourage sound and healthy marriages and to discourage the procreation of the 'unfit' or 'unhealthy.'"³⁹ With such directives in place, it is not surprising that Weimar Germany was characterized by two-child nuclear families. Concerns about diminishing families were compounded by factors such as increasing divorce- and illegitimate birthrates, not to mention the extremely high abortion rates that characterized the years of severe economic crisis. In 1931 alone – and despite the fact that it was illegal – an estimated 1 million abortions were performed in Germany. A 'crisis of the family' was declared, with the 'leading cause' identified as the

'boundless egoism' of women who were betraying their natural vocation and striving for greater personal freedom and independence. More than ever marriage and family, those two pillars of society, seemed to be disintegrating because women, whose calling it was to uphold tradition and morals, were aspiring to the individualistic ethic of the modern age and failing to meet their obligations as mothers of the nation.⁴⁰

Conservatives were particularly concerned with staging a counterattack, but the question was how? The confusing void left by the upheaval in the family structure had to be filled somehow, and a return to 'traditional morality' – or at least the outward show of a return to 'traditional morality' – seemed the most logical solution. Thus the advent of what many perceived a rallying-point for Germans and a cure-all for society's ills – Mother's Day. The public recognition of mothers was not without an ulterior motive:

³⁹Bridenthal, et al. 12.

⁴⁰Frevert 186.

"In an era of depression and mass unemployment, of leftist ferment and right-wing backlash, Mother's Day was promoted by people who hoped to cover up disorder and reinforce tradition: it was a whitewash decorated with roses."⁴¹ Dr. Rudolf Knauer set himself up as the founder of Mother's Day in Germany in the early 1920s, though it was initiated by the American Ann Jarvis and became a US public holiday in 1914.⁴² Knauer established local Mother's Day committees which fell under a national committee as of 1925. This committee joined with the *Arbeitsgemeinschaft für Volksgesundung* (Task Force for the Recovery of the Volk) in 1926 under the leadership of Hans Harmsen, who headed the campaign until the Nazis declared Mother's Day a National Holiday.⁴³ Mother's Day was not intended to overglorify mothers, but rather to promote an 'ethical idea' of motherhood, to negate the perceived 'American rationalization' of motherhood and 'Soviet individualism,' to instill respect for mothers in society, to reawaken a natural desire for children in women, and to strengthen the *Volk*.⁴⁴

The advent of Mother's Day during the Weimar years is of importance to the development of the 'Cult of Motherhood' that characterized Nazi rule. The search for moral images facilitated the idealization of motherhood through Mother's Day, and so the public recognition of mothers as a whole inadvertently spelled the departure of individualism for women. The interest was not in "mothers as persons in distinct social and economic relationships, but rather in *the* mother as the embodiment of ideal virtue

⁴¹Karin Hausen, "Mother's Day in the Weimar Republic," *When Biology became Destiny: Women in Weimar and Nazi Germany*, eds. Renate Bridenthal, et al. (New York: Monthly Review, 1984) 131.

⁴²Michael Burleigh, *The Third Reich. A New History* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2000) 230.

⁴³Hausen 132.

⁴⁴Hausen 140-41.

and behavior."⁴⁵ Thus Mother's Day in Weimar Germany – while failing to curb abortion, a declining birthrate and the disintegration of male-female relationships following demobilization – succeeded in foreshadowing the collective *Mutterbild* that would come to characterize Nazi Germany.

⁴⁵Hausen 140.

III. National Socialist Years

A. Women in the Third Reich

1. Importance of the Mother

The advent of a National Socialist leadership in Germany signified a host of changes for society. Hitler's policy of *Gleichschaltung* (synchronization) was founded upon the concept of a 'superior Aryan race,' and the resulting need for 'racially fit' beings made human reproduction a national issue. As the bearers of children, women found themselves particularly affected by Nazi policy – if considered 'racially fit,' a life of motherhood for the *Reich* was expected; if considered 'unfit,' public humiliation, abortion, sterilization, torture, or even extermination were possible consequences.⁴⁶

Nazi ideology regarding women has certainly received a significant amount of attention from scholars,⁴⁷ but it is nonetheless important to summarize both the ideology and its impact in order to understand better why school readers portrayed women as they did. Of particular importance are the following questions: What was the ideal Nazi family, and how were women expected to fit in? What were some of the positive aspects of this ideology for women? What were some of the negative aspects? How did women's relationships to the public and private spheres alter under Nazi rule? Answers to these questions are not intended to provide a complete account of adult female experiences in Nazi Germany, but rather to furnish an essential background for an investigation of the National Socialist socialization of girls.

⁴⁶Frevert 207.

⁴⁷See Introduction

During the years of the Weimar Republic a peacetime battle line had been drawn, namely between those who wanted women to infiltrate the public sphere further, and those who wanted them firmly encased in the private. With her short hair, trousers, cigarettes, loud voice, assertive personality, and a 'man's' job, the modern woman – or at least her stereotype – had conservatives panicking. Debates on topics from women's abortions to women's fashions raged alongside questions of education and employment, culminating in what is commonly known as the Woman Question. This Woman Question, combined with factors such as a dire economic situation and an overall dissatisfaction with the lack of solidarity among Germans, left conservatives clinging to ideals of tradition and morality.

Adolf Hitler claimed to have the 'cure' for 'her,' along with a ready-made solution for the 'Jewish Problem,' believing that the New Woman and the Jews constituted the leading causes of societal degeneration.⁴⁸ These 'cures' for the perceived illnesses of society were not simply created and publicized for the sake of the 1933 political campaign, but had been thought out and documented years before in Hitler's infamous *Mein Kampf*. Written while Hitler was imprisoned from November 1923 to December 1924 following a failed *Putsch* in Munich, *Mein Kampf* clearly outlined his desire for a 'pure' *Volk* from which acceptable life could spring:

There is only one most sacred human right, and this right is at the same time the most sacred obligation, namely: to see to it that the blood is

⁴⁸Koonz, *Mothers* 56.

preserved pure, so that by the preservation of the best human material a possibility is given for a more noble development of these human beings.

Thus a folkish State primarily will have to lift marriage out of the level of a permanent race degradation in order to give it the consecration of that institution which is called upon to beget images of the Lord and not deformities half man and half ape.⁴⁹

While Hitler made no distinction as to whether this task of 'purification' favored one gender over the other, the fact that women physically gave birth left them with a special responsibility to the *Volk* as bearers of future generations.

Once in power, Adolf Hitler wasted no time bringing his *Volk* concept to fruition. In 1933 he declared, "'in my State the mother is the most important citizen."⁵⁰ This statement was backed by other leading Nazi officials, including the *Reichsminister* of Propaganda Joseph Goebbels (1897-1945), who declared that "'a woman's primary, rightful, and appropriate place is in the family, and the most wonderful task that she can perform is to present her country and people with children."⁵¹ Such comments were not entirely out of place in Europe at the time – France awarded medals to mothers with many children, Britain granted decreases in income tax to large families, and in Italy Mussolini declared a "battle of the birthrate."⁵² What marked Germany as a special case

⁴⁹ Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, anonymous trans. (New York: Reynal and Hitchcock, 1940) 606.

⁵⁰ Quoted in Michael Burleigh and Wolfgang Ippermann, *The Racial State: Germany 1933-1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991) 242.

⁵¹ Quoted in Burleigh and Ippermann 242.

⁵² Koonz, *Mothers* 177.

was its intended use of motherhood not simply as a vehicle to accelerate the birthrate, but also as the primary method by which the *Volk* was to be revitalized.

Motherhood was not a topic limited to a handful of speeches by Nazi party leaders. A legal definition and grounds for motherhood outlined in a legal handbook go so far as to imply that motherhood leads to morality – a claim that is shamelessly reinforced using religious motifs and the works of one of Germany's greatest philosophers:

Muttertum ist die Uerscheinung alles sittlichen Zusammenhangs unter den einzelnen; dem Mutterwesen mußte die Einheit und der Zusammenhang alles Lebendigen am deutlichsten und anschaulichsten werden. Es ist kein Zufall, sondern hat eine tiefe Begründung, daß zwei große Religionsformen, räumlich und zeitlich sehr weit voneinander getrennt, das Bild einer Mutter mit dem Kinde als höchstes Sinnbild gewählt haben. 'Die Entwicklung der höheren Moral hängt daran, daß einer Söhne hat. Dies stimmt ihn unegoistisch, oder richtiger, es erweitert seinen Egoismus der Zeitdauer nach und läßt ihn Ziele über seine individuelle Lebensdauer hinaus mit Ernst verfolgen' (Nietzsche). Man wird hoffentlich einmal verfassungsrechtliche Folgerungen daraus ziehen. Wer eine Zukunft hat, d.h. in Nachkommen weiterlebt, der hat regelmäßig auch ein stärkeres Staatsgefühl, d.h. das Gefühl der Mitverantwortung für die Mitlebenden und vor allem für die nach ihm

Lebenden; wer Nachkommen hat, sollte auch mehr im Staat zu sagen haben als der Ehe- und Kinderlose; etwa durch ein Mehrstimmrecht.⁵³

By indicating that reproduction results in a greater sense of collective responsibility, there was no doubt that motherhood was an issue of concern to all members of society. Coupled with the belief that the family constitutes the 'germ cell' of the *Volksgemeinschaft*⁵⁴ (*Volk* community), German women found themselves suddenly cast as the source of both their nation's morality and immortality.

2. Elevation of Motherhood

The stereotypical picture of a young, glowing mother cradling an infant while surrounded by beaming children and a muscular husband⁵⁵ may leave one suspicious of the anti-emancipatory angle of Nazi idyll, yet it is nonetheless important that one take note of the positive outcomes of Nazism in the lives of women. In a very practical sense, the heightened awareness of motherhood in society sprouted a host of programs designed to prepare women for their task as mothers. For example, courses on topics such as childcare, health, education, welfare, and the role of the *Volk* in state matters were developed. Nazi leaders designed such courses with the aim of better preparing women for their duties as mothers and housewives. Two National Socialist women's organizations were formed – the *NS-Frauenschaft*,⁵⁶ which regularly operated courses

⁵³Dr. Hans Frank, *Nationalsozialistisches Handbuch für Recht und Gesetzgebung* (München: Zentral Verlag der NSDAP, Franz Eher Nachf, 1934) 52.

⁵⁴Frank 1013.

⁵⁵For example, see picture in Burleigh and Wippermann 199.

⁵⁶The *NS-Frauenschaft* was created in 1931 from two previous Nazi women's organizations - the *Deutscher Frauenorden Rotes Hakenkreuz* (1923) and the *Deutscher Frauen-Kampfbund* (1926). For details see: Frevert, *Women in German History: From Bourgeois Emancipation To Sexual Liberation*, 211.

on ideology and leadership training from its *Hochschule der Frau* in Berlin commencing in 1934, and the *Deutsches Frauenwerk*, whose *Reichsmütterdienst*⁵⁷ (RMD) operated courses on issues pertaining to home economics and arranged short vacations for women and their children. Such courses were certainly not unpopular – by 1936, 150 schools had been established by the RMD. By March 1939, some 1,700,000 women had taken part in courses offered, with the number rising to five million by 1944.⁵⁸ The *Deutsches Frauenwerk* even set up 'Bride Schools' for wives and fiancées of SS and SA men. For a cost of RM 135, women could spend six weeks running a model home – children included – to prepare themselves for their tasks as homemakers and mothers.

Both the *NS-Frauenschaft* and the *Deutsches Frauenwerk* provided women with the opportunity to improve skills necessary to their role in the private sphere while also providing some social interaction and access to information on the public sphere,⁵⁹ but they did not stand alone in providing services to women. A second program to assist women was the *Hilfswerk 'Mutter und Kind.'* As an agency of the *NS-Volkswohlfahrt*, this organization played an important role in practical assistance for German women. This was made particularly evident through the establishment of recuperation homes for over-tired mothers, drop-in advice and health centers, and kindergartens, not to mention their welfare programs by which needy families could receive clothing, groceries, and other forms of material assistance.⁶⁰

⁵⁷The *Reichsmütterdienst* was established in celebration of Mother's Day 1934. For details see: Frevert 233.

⁵⁸Frevert 233.

⁵⁹Pine, *Nazi* 72-76.

⁶⁰Pine, *Nazi* 23-38.

A further positive aspect of Nazi initiatives for women was the establishment of the *Lebensborn* agency. Developing as what could be considered a logical offshoot of Nazi ideology,⁶¹ *Lebensborn* (fountain of life) was founded in 1935 with the intention of accommodating unwed mothers and illegitimate children. Safe, comfortable maternity homes were provided in which both single women and the wives of SS men could deliver their infants. Unwed women could leave their infants at the home for one year if they were unable to care for them, following which they could choose to take the child or have it given to foster parents, who were usually SS leaders with few or no children of their own.⁶²

Programs aside, several other measures were enacted to raise the status of motherhood. All mothers could opt for the title of '*Frau*' effective 1937, regardless of their marital status – a measure that was intended to counter social stigma surrounding single mothers – and by 1939, unwed motherhood ceased to constitute grounds for dismissal from the civil service.⁶³ Mother's Day was turned into a national holiday, special medals known as the Cross of Honor of the German Mother were awarded to women with *kinderreiche* families beginning in 1938 (five children warranted a bronze medal, six a silver, and seven a gold), and members of the *Hitler Jugend* were to salute any decorated mother as a sign of respect and admiration.⁶⁴ One politician went so far as

⁶¹Koonz, *Mothers* 197.

⁶²Pine, *Nazi* 38-39.

⁶³Burleigh and Wippermann 252.

⁶⁴Koonz, *Mothers* 186.

to suggest that motherhood be "rewarded with political privileges – in the form of a multiple vote – according to a formula that equated it with military service for men."⁶⁵

3. Reality in the Private Sphere

All of the above contributed to an elevation of motherhood and honor for women who fulfilled their 'duty' to the state. Yet did such outward shows of honor and the development of assistance agencies translate into an improvement of the position of women? An answer to this question lies in the following: Motherhood in the Third Reich did have the appealing qualities of a return to tradition and morality in addition to a display of respect for women as operators of their own sphere, but the lure toward the conservative merely acted as a cover for the main reason for encouraging motherhood, namely to reduce women to their biological function and thereby increase the birthrate and revitalize the *Volk*. Furthermore, all of the state-sponsored initiatives and Mother's Day parades in honor of the 'racially fit' shrivel in comparison with the policy meted out to those women deemed 'unfit' for motherhood in the Reich.

An initial warning-bell was sounded by left-wing politicians prior to the Nazis' 1933 seizure of power. Antifeminist statements made by Nazis denoting that a woman's place was as a 'maid and servant of man' were pounced on by *KPD* and *SPD* propaganda.⁶⁶ Whether all Nazi party members agreed with such statements at the time is unknown, but the proof, as the saying goes, was in the pudding – regardless of a party member's personal stance, Nazism distinguished itself from other political movements

⁶⁵Schoenbaum 188.

⁶⁶Burleigh and Wippermann 248.

by its decidedly masculine flavor. Richard Bessel provides a pointed argument in that "Nazi activism was a predominately male preserve; Nazi violence a product of political culture which praised 'male' virtues of toughness and standing one's ground."⁶⁷ The masculinization of Nazi political culture sharpened the distinction between the 'masculine' public sphere and the 'feminine' private sphere. Thus it comes as no great surprise that increased male domination of the public under Nazism was reflected in an increased privatization of female life and a lack of tolerance toward anything in the no-man's-land in-between. The polarization of gender and sphere went so far that the *Reichszentrale* was made responsible for keeping "the division between the sexes intact"⁶⁸ and for persecuting those who attempted to lesson the distinction. Heinrich Himmler (1900-45) was particularly obsessed with keeping the sexes polarized – the *Männerbund* structure of Nazism had left many fearful of any deviance from the prescribed norm,⁶⁹ and so the near-mythical ideals of ultra-masculine men and ultra-feminine women quickly came to be the only acceptable forms even in reality.

The extent to which Nazi leaders sought to limit and even reverse women's participation in the public sphere was not simply restricted to a pro-motherhood campaign. Women were generally barred from military service and high-level political activities, but the discrimination did not end there – female civil servants faced deteriorating prospects of senior positions and promotions, unequal wage scales, and

⁶⁷Richard Bessel, "Political Violence and the Nazi Seizure of Power," *Life in the Third Reich*, ed. Richard Bessel (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986) 13.

⁶⁸George Mosse, *Nationalism and Sexuality: Middle-Class Morality and Sexual Norms in Modern Europe* (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin, 1985) 164.

⁶⁹Mosse 164.

dismissal for those who were married. Female school teachers were removed from positions of authority, and a ratio of male-to-female junior teachers was set at 4:1. Female students could comprise no more than ten percent of university population effective 1933, and doors to careers as judges, lawyers, and public prosecutors were closed as of 1936.⁷⁰ In short, the role of women in the public sphere was reduced to church and community (*Gemeinde*) activities.⁷¹

Initiatives supposedly aimed at improving motherhood and honoring mothers were as much a cover for a desire to reduce women to their biological function as the need for *Lebensraum* was grounds for an eastward invasion. For example, the development of *Lebensborn* indicated an official acceptance of unwed mothers and illegitimate children, yet its ultimate purpose was simply to increase the output of 'racially fit' babies – the fact that marriage laws remained intact and sections of the German Civil Code discriminating against unwed mothers were not amended challenges the notion that illegitimacy was widely considered acceptable.⁷² *Lebensborn* homes in Germany also took on the controversial role of providing shelter for 'valuable' children from the East whose parents had been killed, and those who had been kidnapped as part of Himmler's 'quest for Nordic blood.'⁷³

⁷⁰Frevert 219.

⁷¹Claudia Koonz, "The Competition for a Women's *Lebensraum*, 1928-1934" *When Biology Became Destiny. Women in Weimar and Nazi Germany*, eds. Renate Bridenthal, et al. (New York: Monthly Review, 1984) 203.

⁷²Frevert 238.

⁷³Gisela Bock, "Antinatalism, maternity and paternity in National Socialist racism," *Maternity and Gender Policies. Women and the Rise of the European Welfare States, 1880s-1950s*, eds. Gisela Bock and Pat Thane (London and New York: Routledge, 1991) 244.

The operation of *NS-Frauenschaft* and *Deutsches Frauenwerk* courses for women also were nothing more than an attempt to keep women from the public sphere. Those who attended may have improved their working knowledge of home economics and of raising children, but they were never taught how to prepare for anything other than what they would encounter in the home or at the marketplace. Ironically, while the women running such courses were busy filling women's heads with the notion that their sole worth consisted in their ability to reproduce and run a home, their own families and homes were attended to by servants.⁷⁴

The *Hilfswerk* 'Mutter und Kind' centers were also a sham. An outward show of humanitarian aide and helpful advice for mothers was actually nothing more than a replacement of the sexual advice centers operated during the Weimar years. What had originated as centers for family planning were conveniently banned and then reopened as agencies promoting large families to suit the new political climate.⁷⁵

Even the award of the Cross of Honor of the German Mother was not without a hefty list of conditions. Some 3 million women were awarded the Cross on Mother's Day in 1939, but this did not mean that it was easy to come by:

The ideal candidate was a conscientious, well-presented housewife with orderly domestic arrangements, whose husband worked and who had borne legitimate children. Avant-garde SS destigmatisation of illegitimacy was not widely shared. The ideal mother always took pregnancies to term, and did not smoke or drink. She had no lovers. Her

⁷⁴Frevert 234.

⁷⁵Koonz, *Mothers* 186.

husband could smoke like a chimney, but if he drank excessively the Mother's Cross would prove elusive. Neither husband nor wife had any criminal convictions, paid their rent and settled their debts, but if they were reliant upon welfare they expended it upon the children rather than inessentials.⁷⁶

In other words, the award may have been primarily based on the number of children a woman had borne, but it also served as a clever tool by which women could be held accountable not only for the nation's immortality, but also for its morality.

Sadly, not all women were permitted to answer Hitler's call for motherhood. The goal of increasing the birthrate was accompanied by the manic desire to 'purify' the blood of the *Volk*. The result was that "Nazi women extolled motherhood as their highest goal in life, while denying thousands of 'undesirable' women the chance of ever marrying and bearing children."⁷⁷ Five months after Hitler came to power, Minister of the Interior Wilhelm Frick (1877-1946) outlined Nazi 'population and race policy.' Claiming that Germany was suffering a decline in culture and ethnicity, the way was paved for the July 1933 law on state-run birth control. Under this new law, compulsory sterilization was introduced with an estimated 1.5 million people slotted for the procedure.⁷⁸ Article 12 of the sterilization law declared the procedure compulsory for 'inferior' members of both sexes, while Article 14 prohibited sterilization for 'healthy'

⁷⁶Burleigh 231.

⁷⁷Koonz, *Mothers* 285.

⁷⁸Bock, *Antinatalism* 235.

members.⁷⁹ The 'objective' scientific criteria used to determine a candidate's suitability for sterilization is neatly summarized as follows:

Blanket terms like 'feeble-mindedness' or 'schizophrenia' were used regardless of their clinical meaning to disguise the fact that the victims simply deviated from 'normal' behavior, in ways which offended the categories of their social 'superiors'. People who failed to be monogamous, thrifty, clean, efficient, tidy, responsible, and striving upwards were designated 'socially feeble-minded', on the basis of 'intelligence tests', spurious 'diagnoses', or more usually gossip and hearsay.⁸⁰

Marriage was certainly not untouched by such laws. In fact, a Marriage Health Law was enacted in 1935, making the right to marry conditional upon one's racial 'fitness.' In order to marry and gain access to marriage loans, family allowances, and tax rebates, applicants had to obtain a certificate of 'fitness to marry.' This naturally lent a certain amount of risk to an application for any of the above. A worst-case scenario may be found in a young couple who applied for the marriage loan, but was turned down. Results of the racial examination had determined that the wife was 'feeble-minded' and should therefore be sterilized – she had failed two classes as a school pupil.⁸¹

⁷⁹Gisela Bock, "Equality and difference in National Socialist racism," *Beyond Equality and Difference. Citizenship, feminist politics and female subjectivity*, eds. Gisela Bock and Susan James (London and New York: Routledge, 1992) 94.

⁸⁰Burleigh and Wippermann 254.

⁸¹Burleigh and Wippermann 252.

A question naturally arising from a discussion of birth control is whether the measures affected women more than men. Ute Frevert argues that gender was of no consequence to the Nazis when dealing with political opponents.⁸² Based on statistics, the same could be said concerning their 'hereditary' opponents – of the 400,000 sterilization victims, approximately half were men, and half were women.⁸³ However, the consequences of sterilization ultimately affected women to a greater degree than men. For example, of the five thousand people who died as a result of sterilization, women comprised roughly 90 percent.⁸⁴ Following sterilization, an unknown number of persons, mainly women, committed suicide.⁸⁵ Abortion was legalized in 1935 as an expansion of the sterilization law – a change that permitted the state to terminate pregnancies by force based on health and eugenic reasons. Following an involuntary abortion on eugenic grounds, a woman was automatically sterilized – approximately 30,000 such procedures were performed.⁸⁶ Ultimately, motherhood was to be unattainable to most women despite its designation as a woman's 'natural role.' The horrifying extent to which women were categorized for production like cattle can be seen in the following:

Those women who were considered desirable mothers were not a majority, but [...] a minority of about 10 to 30 percent. The blood-and-soil ideologue Darré in a well-known publication divided women into four

⁸²Frevert 249.

⁸³Bock, *Equality* 96.

⁸⁴Bock, *Equality* 96.

⁸⁵Bock, *Antinatalism* 237.

⁸⁶Bock, *Equality* 97.

classes: those in the first should be encouraged to marry and have children; children of the second group, though not to be encouraged, were not objectionable; the third group should be allowed to marry, but where possible be sterilized beforehand; the fourth group should not marry and be sterilized at any cost.⁸⁷

Policies regarding the 'unfit' members of society aside, it is also important to note that even for women who met the ideal standards set by their leaders, family life could be anything but idyllic. One of the greatest flaws of the Nazi idyll was that despite the homage paid to women's natural capacity as life-givers, motherhood was not permitted to be a natural occurrence. Instead, duty was to be placed before rights or personal preference in a grossly orchestrated attempt to fulfill one man's dream of a 'pure' *Volk*. While Nazi propaganda was busy hammering the idea that joy was to be found through meeting duties, the true joy of family life was removed as its private side was made public. Orders for SS marriages to produce a minimum of four children⁸⁸ coupled with the sentiment that 'the most accepted child was he who fell for the Motherland'⁸⁹ are evidence of the warp of Nazi rhetoric and the disparity between what was idealized (i.e. the happy family) and what was really expected (i.e. duty to the *Volk* above all else). Michael Burleigh's summary of the 'ideal' family may strike one as humorous, yet the bitter reality behind the humor was neither acknowledged nor dealt with by the Nazis:

⁸⁷Bock, *Antinatalism* 240.

⁸⁸Pine, *Nazi* 45.

⁸⁹Burleigh 232.

Nazism may have paid lip service to family values, but its totalitarian regimentation of society weakened family ties and subverted traditional hierarchies, both in the home and at school. There was some point in the joke that with the father in the SA, the mother a member of the NSF, a son in the HJ and a daughter in the BDM (the League of German Maidens), the National Socialist family only crossed paths at the Nuremburg Rally.⁹⁰

The challenge of keeping up the appearance of Nazi family values was made even more difficult as of 1939, when massive steps taken earlier to push women back into the private sphere suddenly became detrimental in the face of impending war. As with the First World War, women were needed to replace the men called up for service, thus Nazi leaders found their ability to backpedal discreetly on the issue of women in the public sphere tested. The effectiveness of propaganda was difficult to reverse – women were not easily enticed back into the workforce.⁹¹ Having had their life in the private sphere extolled for six years, it was suddenly necessary for women to face motherhood, childcare, house care, the loss of loved ones at the front, food shortages, and up to a sixty-hour workweek outside the home.⁹² Such conditions miserably failed to allow for the cultivation of the ideal family.

Even without the war and the accompanying changes to family life, efforts to ensure ideal Nazi families were not entirely successful. For example, the Law for the

⁹⁰Burleigh 234.

⁹¹Burleigh and Wippermann 259-60.

⁹²Bridenthal, et al. 27.

Reduction of Unemployment was passed in June of 1933. Designed to increase birthrates and punish *Doppelverdiener*, interest-free loans of RM 1,000 were available to young couples on the condition that the wife give up her job. The loan was granted in the form of vouchers for household items, and could be repaid at a rate of 1 percent per month. For every child born to the couple, the load would be reduced by 25 percent. What Nazi leaders had not counted on was the lack of positive response to their scheme. Most women preferred to keep their jobs and forego the loans, and so in 1937 the law was altered to permit women to keep their jobs and still be eligible for a loan. Even this concession did not alter young couples' preference for one- or two-child families.⁹³

Despite such dismal failures, the Nazis continued to propagate their 'ideal' family. Not only did they need to increase the birthrate and continue to 'purify' the *Volk*, but the need to counterbalance the inhumane side of Nazism grew. Genocide within the Reich was compounded by war, and the moral appeal of 'traditional' family life became an essential 'gloss' for an otherwise immoral and horrifying reality:

For the illusion of harmony, in this case the idyll of the cradle, brood and home hearth, was intimately related to the capacity to run amok through chaotic depredations, murdering the children of other mothers, burning down their homes, villages and cities in a frenzy of apocalyptic abandon. Motherhood joined the rest of the Nazi idyll in supplying restorative comfort – the equivalent of a warm bath in cheap, lurid, viscous

⁹³Burleigh and Wippermann 250.

substances – for people whose personalities were often not up to the messy realities of the racial mission they had set themselves.⁹⁴

Ironically, yet not surprisingly, the idyll remained an illusion – despite their best efforts, Nazi leaders were not able to effectively dictate the lives of all women. This was demonstrated by the fact that birthrates failed to rise significantly while abortion rates failed to drop.⁹⁵ Demands for the production of babies took precedence over happy homes,⁹⁶ and the ‘happy family’ came to be characterized by a lack of strong husband-wife bonds.⁹⁷ Thus, in the case of its policy on women, Nazism was unable to deliver on its promise of simultaneous “radical change and upholding of traditional values.”⁹⁸

B. Girls in the Third Reich

1. The *Bund deutscher Mädel*

Besides a discussion on women in the Third Reich, it is appropriate to examine some of the issues pertaining specifically to girls. A two-pronged system of socialization existed for school-aged children of either gender – school itself, and the *Hitler Jugend* (HJ – Hitler Youth) or *Bund deutscher Mädel* (BDM – League of German Girls). These youth groups were not designed simply to provide entertainment and relieve parents during after-school hours, but to be the primary socializing agent for youngsters.

⁹⁴Burleigh 231-232.

⁹⁵Koonz, *Mothers* 186-187.

⁹⁶Koonz, *Mothers* 185.

⁹⁷Koonz, *Mothers* 399.

⁹⁸Bessel 15.

The Hitler Youth was founded in 1922 as the Youth League of the *NSDAP*, but did not change its name until 1926. From 1929 an *NS* School League also existed, and from 1930 a League of German Maidens. Effective 1931, the three organizations were amalgamated into the Hitler Youth and placed under the control of the newly appointed *Reichsjugendführer* Baldur von Schirach (1907-74). The *BDM* continued to function as the female branch of the *HJ*, and by the October 1932 'Day of Reich Youth' at Potsdam, 80,000 members of the greater *HJ* paraded past Hitler.⁹⁹

Baldur von Schirach made his reasons for founding the *HJ* in 1931 clear in his handbook *Die Hitler-Jugend: Idee und Gestalt*. Therein one finds a desire that young people be totally loyal to their Führer and to their Reich:

Der Jungvolkjunge mußte nicht erst einer anderen Weltanschauung entrissen werden, er wurde nicht vom Nationalsozialismus durch die Redner und Führer dieser Bewegung überzeugt. Er wuchs als Nationalsozialist auf. Er mußte sich nicht mit anderen Ideen abplagen und die inneren Kämpfe des Zweifels durchmachen, die der Hitlerjunge ertragen mußte, bis er seinen Weg zu unserer Fahne fand. Er ist gleichsam als Nationalsozialist geboren, denn als er in das Jungvolkalter trat und zum Jungenleben erwachte, gab es in Deutschland nichts anderes mehr als Adolf Hitler und Nationalsozialismus.¹⁰⁰

It is interesting to note that Schirach goes so far as to state that under no circumstances should a child be exposed to any ideology other than that of National Socialism. In

⁹⁹Burleigh and Wippermann 202.

¹⁰⁰Baldur von Schirach, *Die Hitler-Jugend. Idee und Gestalt* (Leipzig: Koehler & Amelang, 1934) 83.

order to ensure a constant input of National Socialist ideology both in and out of the classroom, Schirach determined that a child's authority figures were not to be one's parents, but rather that "die Autorität des Lehrers innerhalb der Schule die höchste Autorität sein muß. Ebenso selbstverständlich ist aber die andere Feststellung, daß die Autorität des HJ.-Führers die höchste Autorität außerhalb der Schule ist."¹⁰¹

Another aim of the organization was to develop the same attitude of solidarity and self-sacrifice expected of adults.¹⁰² Entrance to the *BDM* did not simply mean joining an average girls' club, but joining the *Volk*:

Der Eintritt in den *BDM*. verpflichtet die Mädels zu einem Leben, das anders ist als das aller anderen Jugend. Auch sie geloben sich der Gemeinschaft und stellen das Ziel der Gemeinschaft höher als ihr "Ich." Sie sollen tanzen und fröhlich sein, sollen aber wissen, daß es für sie kein Privatleben gibt, sondern daß sie Teil bleiben ihrer Gemeinschaft und ihres hohen Zieles.¹⁰³

Being a member of the *BDM* was not without benefits. Not only did it indicate that a girl was a loyal National Socialist, but it gave her an opportunity to feel like she belonged to a group and that she had an important cause to uphold. She could be out of the house and away from parental authority, all the while receiving a broader socialization than her mother would have had.¹⁰⁴ The focus on youth rather than

¹⁰¹Schirach, *Hitler* 169.

¹⁰²Schirach, *Hitler* 93.

¹⁰³Schirach, *Hitler* 97-98.

¹⁰⁴Dagmar Reese, "Emancipation or Social Incorporation: Girls in the *Bund Deutscher Mädel*," *Education and Fascism: Political Identity and Social Education in Nazi Germany*, eds. Heinz Sünker and Hans-Uwe Otto (London and Washington: Falmer, 1997) 103.

womanhood made the *BDM* especially appealing, and by the end of 1933, the *BDM* was 600,000 members strong.¹⁰⁵

The *BDM* was also popular due to the opportunities for promotion within its extensive structure. A *Mädelschaft* (team) was formed with approximately 10 girls under a leader. Four such teams comprised a *Schar* (company), four *Scharen* a *Gruppe* (group), three to five *Gruppen* a *Ring* (ring), four to six *Ringe* an *Untergau*, and twenty *Untergaue* an *Obergau*. The *Reichsjugendführer* (Leader of the Reich Youth) then held leadership over the thirty-five *Obergau*.¹⁰⁶ This extensive hierarchy was ripe for promotions and leadership opportunities, a fact no more lost on girls than was the personal freedom they acquired within the *BDM*, however limited it was. Indeed, answering to a youth group leader only slightly older than oneself did not seem to fall into the same category as doing housework or mending under a mother's watchful eye.¹⁰⁷

Despite the positive side to life in the *BDM*, it is nonetheless essential that one consider its role among socialization tactics designed to produce loyal National Socialists. Commencing at age ten, girls entered the *Jungmädel* section of the *BDM* where they remained until age fourteen. This was to be followed by four years in the *BDM* proper, and then entrance to *Glaube und Schönheit* for those aged eighteen to twenty-one. By 1939, membership was not an option, but a requirement for girls of 'Aryan' blood.¹⁰⁸ The initial elation of being freed from parental authority that girls experienced while in the *BDM* was firmly replaced by the authority of the state, and the

¹⁰⁵Frevert 242.

¹⁰⁶Frevert 242.

¹⁰⁷Frevert 244.

¹⁰⁸Frevert 243.

state-regulated education within the organization created an insurmountable distinction between those who belonged and those who did not. The resulting alienation was sufficient evidence that society wielded as great a power over *BDM* members as it had over any previous generation of women.¹⁰⁹

Another negative aspect of the *BDM* was its usage as a vital tool in the socialization of girls into their roles as wives and mothers, just as the *HJ* was used to train boys to wage war and operate in the public sphere. The insistence upon gender-specific norms went so far as to limit and even withdraw girls from the position of *BDM* functionary lest a young woman be turned into a 'masculine' political type.¹¹⁰ The only instance in which Schirach saw boys and girls as equals was in their loyalty to and heroism for the state. This loyalty and heroism, however, was to take different forms. Schirach claimed: "Die Generation, die einmal an der deutschen Zukunft mitgestalten will, braucht heroische Frauen."¹¹¹ Yet Schirach's 'heroic women' were not to be found toting bazookas or leading attacks on enemy troops. Instead, women's heroism was to take the form of passivity – a contrast to the 'manly' heroism involving action:

Girls were to react to circumstances with their emotions, whereas boys were to react with their minds; girls were to store the experiences internally, whilst boys were to use theirs actively and creatively; girls were to be docile and to give of themselves, whilst boys were to affect

¹⁰⁹Reese 108.

¹¹⁰Detlev Peukert, "Youth in the Third Reich," *Life in the Third Reich*, ed. Richard Bessel (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986) 28.

¹¹¹Schirach, *Hitler* 97.

others, gain victories and conquer; girls were to be passively content, whereas boys were to be active builders or destroyers of cultures; girls were to care for the family and household, whilst boys were to lay the foundations for the state; girls were to view life as a gift, whereas boys were to consider it as a struggle; for girls 'motherliness' – not femininity – was the ultimate aim, whilst for boys it was very clearly 'manliness', in a militarized sense.¹¹²

The *BDM* was to play an instrumental part in the cultivation of the above, while not failing to focus activities also on physical training, overall health and instilling a sense of duty.

Reception of the *BDM* was mixed. On the one hand were girls who thoroughly enjoyed being involved in the organization, while others were less than enthusiastic:

Many girls threw themselves into the sporting and girl guide-type activities that the Hitler Youth offered, and enjoyed the adventure of trekking through the countryside, sitting round campfires, and taking part in competitions. Others were put off precisely by the unfeminine conduct encouraged in the *Jungmädel* and *BDM*. Older girls tended to have less time for the ethos of parliamentary service, with its uniforms and compulsory labour. Neither were they all absolutely thrilled by the idea of becoming 'fully trained' for their future roles as housewives and mothers, which was the womanly vocation recommended by the *BDM* leadership

¹¹²Pine, *Nazi* 49.

from 1936 onwards [...]. Sixteen- and seventeen-year-olds were not very keen on all-girls folk dancing either: they would have preferred to be listening to American jazz and dancing with young men. For them the BDM represented yet another one of those unpleasant obligatory organizations. The pressure to conform mounted even further after 1939: as the specifically youth-oriented [...] activities of the girls' groups were curtailed, compulsory service and the deployment of 'volunteer' labour became more common.¹¹³

The BDM was especially loathsome to the young women eager to be part of taboo groups such as the *Swingjugend* (Swing Youth), the *Edelweisspiraten* (Edelweiss Pirates), or any other group that rejected the prescribed norm for National Socialist youth.¹¹⁴ The BDM's image was not improved as critics toyed with the organization's initials. *Bund deutscher Mädel* could easily be altered to more accurately reflect the aims of the youth group, with resulting acronyms along the lines of *Balder, drück mich* (Baldur, take me – referring to Baldur von Schirach) and *Bedarfsartikel deutscher Männer* (useful things for German men).¹¹⁵ Parents, however, could only stand by and watch. Their authority outside of school had been replaced by that of their child's *HJ* leader, and as youth activities took up more and more time, parents not only saw less

¹¹³Frevert 246–47.

¹¹⁴See Peukert 25–40 and Burleigh and Wippermann 202–241 for details on youth counterculture in Germany from 1933 to 1945.

¹¹⁵Koonz, *Mothers* 399.

and less of their children, but they also had their role effectively reduced to providing a "bed and breakfast service."¹¹⁶

2. School Reforms

The *BDM* was intended to act as a critical medium for indoctrinating girls in the spirit of National Socialism, but it is also necessary to examine the other primary source of social control exploited by the Nazis – the school. Nazi leaders were not blind to the necessity of recruiting youngsters to their cause, and controlling the education of those aged five to eighteen in schools would complement the efforts exerted to control them out of school via the *Hitler Jugend*. The Nazis were by no means the first to recognize the importance of early socialization – it had in fact been recognized long before by the renowned German educationalist and founder of the *Kindergarten* Friedrich Froebel (1782-1852) in the nineteenth century.¹¹⁷ Nor were the Nazis the first to see the potential of the alliance between politics and pedagogy – in fact, the use of education for the promotion of political solidarity was explored long before Hitler's birth by Friedrich Wilhelm IV (1795-1861), who stated in a speech to seminary directors in 1849: "All the misery which has overcome Prussia in the distant past is your, only your fault, the fault of the rotten education, the irreligious mass knowledge, which presents itself as real knowledge."¹¹⁸ The Stiehl Ordinance of 1854 'resolved' the issue of ambiguous

¹¹⁶Burleigh 236.

¹¹⁷Lisa Pine, "The dissemination of Nazi ideology and Family values through school textbooks," *History of Education* 25.1 (March 1996): 91.

¹¹⁸Quoted in Heinz Sünker, "Political Culture and Education in Germany," *Education and Fascism: Political Identity and Social Education in Nazi Germany*, eds. Heinz Sünker and Hans-Uwe Otto (London and Washington: Falmer, 1997) 3.

education in Germany by enforcing state-regulation of school materials,¹¹⁹ but it was not until 1933 that Germany witnessed how far state-regulation of education could go.

The continual reinforcing of National Socialist ideology both in work and play would be the only assurance of youngsters following their *Führer* in pursuit of a *Volkgemeinschaft*. The need for malleable and blindly-obedient young people was too great to permit parents any authoritative role, and so through *Hitler Jugend* activities and school, children spent most of their waking hours being programmed – or reprogrammed, if they were older – to accept the *Führer* as the highest authority, rather than their parents.¹²⁰ Austrian Chancellor Kurt von Schuschnigg's (1897-1977) statement in 1935 that “the road to the new state begins in the schools”¹²¹ backed up the allegation found in *Mein Kampf* that altering education to suit the aims of the *Volkgemeinschaft* was of the utmost importance. Though certainly no pedagogue – evidence of which can be found in instances such as his remark that former sergeants could easily become village teachers with no additional training simply because they would make “excellent gymnastics instructors”¹²² –, Hitler had a very clear picture of what he thought a child's education should entail. Of particular concern was the acquisition of a wide body of knowledge that supposedly had no practical use, thus his notion that

¹¹⁹Sünker 4.

¹²⁰Frevert 239.

¹²¹Pine, *Dissemination* 93.

¹²²Gilmer W. Blackburn, *Education in the Third Reich. Race and History in Nazi Textbooks* (Albany: State University of New York, 1985) 94.

youthful brains must in general not be burdened with things 95 per cent of which it does not need and therefore forgets again. Especially the curriculum of grammar and middle schools presents today a mongrel character; in many instances, in the various subjects the material of what has to be learned has swollen up to such a degree that only a fraction of it remains in the head of the individual pupil and only a fraction of this abundance can find application, while on the other hand it is not sufficient for the need of one who works in a certain field and earns his living therein.¹²³

This is not to say that the education children received prior to 1933 was particularly 'bad,' but rather that it failed to produce young men and young women who were totally committed to the *Volksgemeinschaft* and therefore – in Hitler's eyes – served no useful purpose in the New Order. The goal of early education during the Weimar period was "die allmähliche Entfaltung der kindlichen Kräfte aus dem Spiel- und Bewerbungstrieb zum *sittlichen* Arbeitswillen, der sich innerhalb der Schulgemeinschaft betätigt,"¹²⁴ whereas the task of schooling under National Socialism was "die Jugend unseres Volkes zu körperlich, seelisch und geistig gesunden und starken deutschen Männern und Frauen zu erziehen, die, in Heimat und Volkstum fest verwurzelt, ein jeder an seiner Stelle zum vollen Einsatz für Führer und Volk bereit sind."¹²⁵ The new "Du bist nichts – dein Volk ist alles!"¹²⁶ ideology prompted the publication of numerous pedagogical documents, all

¹²³Hitler 626.

¹²⁴Hubert Hettwer, *Lehr- und Bildungspläne 1921-1974* (Bad Heilbrunn/Obb.: Julius Klinkhardt, 1976) 9.

¹²⁵Hettwer 47.

¹²⁶Unknown Author, *Erziehung zur Volksgemeinschaft. Ein neuer Weg*, ed. Reichswaltung des

outlining the 'new education' or 'new way' to be found in German schools. Such documents were quick to criticize the 'liberal' education of the Weimar years and to sing the praises of more 'purposeful' school years. For example, a document published by the *Nationalsozialistische Lehrerbund* (National Socialist League of Teachers) fashioned the following contrast:

Im Hintergrund der liberalistischen Erziehung standen Erziehungsideale. Im Hintergrund der nationalsozialistischen Erziehung stehen Notwendigkeiten. Die liberalistische Erziehung versuchte den Menschen allein zu etwas – zur sittlichvernünftigen Persönlichkeit, zum einsichtigen Staatsbürger – zu erziehen. Die nationalsozialistische Erziehung erzieht den Menschen für etwas: Für Deutschland! Am Beginn der liberalistischen Erziehung steht die Frage: Was braucht das Menschlein zu seiner eigenen Glücklichkeit? [...] Am Beginn der nationalsozialistischen Erziehung steht die Frage: Was braucht Deutschland? Wobei die Notwendigkeiten in der Wirklichkeit begründet liegen.¹²⁷

In order to achieve the goal of providing a thoroughly National Socialist education, drastic action had to be taken. To ensure the propagation of the 'correct' ideals and to clear schools of 'undesirables,' numerous teachers were forced to resign their posts. During the first few months of Nazi rule, 19 of the 34 municipal educational counselors, 83 of the 622 head teachers, 130 of the 3,200 secondary school teachers, 230

NS.-Lehrerbundes (Berlin: H. A. Braun, n.d.) 35.

¹²⁷ *Erziehung* 11.

of the 8,500 primary and middle school teachers, and 190 of the 1,300 instructors at technical schools were removed – in Berlin alone.¹²⁸ Places of those removed were filled by carefully selected young teachers who were active in Nazi political organizations, were highly skilled technical training personnel, or were among higher military ranks.¹²⁹ Teachers found their associations ‘coordinated’ as of 1933 into the NS-League of Teachers, and also found themselves granted a level of power ripe for abuse – corporal punishment was reintroduced, parent and pupil participation abolished and the ‘Führer’ principle introduced, which gave head teachers a license to lord over both pupils and other teachers. Politicized morning assemblies and hallway patrols in Party uniform gave added pleasure to the power-hungry.¹³⁰

It also became essential to educate girls and boys for their gender-specific roles in the new *Volksgemeinschaft*. Adolf Hitler did not think it unnecessary to educate a girl, but rather that her education served a different purpose than that of her male counterpart. Hence the notion that “Analogous with the education of the boy, the folkish State can also direct the education of the girl from the same viewpoints. Here too the main stress should be put on physical training, and only after this on the promotion of spiritual and last of all, the intellectual values. The *goal* of female education has invariably to be the future mother.”¹³¹

¹²⁸Burleigh and Wippermann 208.

¹²⁹Kurt-Ingo Flessau, *Schule der Diktatur. Lehrpläne und Schulbücher des Nationalsozialismus* (München: Ehrenwirth, 1977) 15.

¹³⁰Burleigh and Wippermann 210.

¹³¹Hitler 621.

To assist with the process, a ban was placed on co-education in 1933,¹³² and the seventy types of *Oberschulen* in existence by 1933 were funneled into three main channels, namely the *neusprachliche und naturwissenschaftliche Oberschule*, the *humanistische Gymnasium*, and the *Mädchenoberschule*.¹³³ It also became necessary to justify the pedagogical reforms for girls, and the clever tactic of implying that a woman's emancipation could only be achieved through dedication to the private sphere was employed. Comments such as "Im letzten Jahrhundert ist die Bildung des Mädchens ein Abklatsch der Bildung des Mannes gewesen"¹³⁴ were circulated, along with an appeal to the emotions disguised as logic. For example:

Man hat die Frau aus ihrer eigenen Welt herausgeholt. Wie groß ist sie einmal gewesen! Auch in der Stadt. Wenn der Mann schon in einen einseitigen Beruf abgeglitten war, die Frau stand immer noch in ihrem Reich, das seit Jahrtausenden ihr gehörte. Hatte sie auch mit Acker und Wiese nichts mehr zu tun, sie hatte den Garten, der ihrem Wesen noch mehr entsprach. Sie konnte pflegen und hegen, das Leben in vorsichtiger Hand tragen. Tiere gehörten immer noch zu ihr, fast genau so wie der Bäuerin. Sie sorgte für den Tisch. Aus ihrer Hand kam das Brot. Fast alles hatte sie von Grund auf bereitet. Sogar für die Kleidung sorgte sie vom Faden der Leinwand an. Sie wob sogar noch. Sie wusch und schlachtete.

¹³²Burleigh and Wippermann 212.

¹³³Flessau 14-15. In addition to the three main channels of *Oberschulen* which followed four years in a *Grundschule*, pupils could opt to complete a six-year program at an *Aufbauoberschule* commencing in the seventh grade. See Flessau 15.

¹³⁴Helmut Stellrecht, *Neue Erziehung* (Berlin: Wilhelm Limpert, 1942) 160.

Sie erntete und lagerte ein. Ihr eigenstes Reich aber war die Kinderstube.

Hier gehörte ihr das Leben selbst.¹³⁵

An excellent example of the disparity between girls' and boys' education in the Third Reich can be found by comparing the gender-specific chemistry lesson plans for *Oberschulen*. While sixth- to eighth-grade chemistry for boys was classified as the *naturwissenschaftlich-mathematischer Zweig*, girls were entered into the *hauswirtschaftliche Form*. To better illustrate the difference, one can simply note the content of a sixth-grade boys' chemistry class in an *Oberschule* versus that of a girls'. The lesson content for boys is as follows: "Sauerstoff, Wasserstoff (Verbindungsgesetze, Molekular- und Atomtheorie); Schwefelverbindungen (Katalyse, Säure, Base, Salz, Wertigkeit); Halogenverbindungen (Elektrolyse, natürliche Grundstoffgruppe); Deutsche Salzlagerstätten und ihre Ausbeutung."¹³⁶ The lesson content for girls in the same grade is remarkably different:

Brennstoffe und ihre Verwendung im Haushalt; Vertiefte Einführung in die organische Chemie (mit besonderer Berücksichtigung der Nährstoffe): Alkohol, Essigsäure, Fette, Kohlehydrate, Eiweiß, Gärungsgewerbe, Schutz vor Gärung und Fäulnis; Wasser (Härte, Trinkwasser, Abwässer); Waschmittel; Das Wichtigste über die Behandlung der im Haushalt gebräuchlichen Gerätestoffe (Metalle, Metallegierungen, Glas, Tonwaren, Porzellan).¹³⁷

¹³⁵Stellrecht 160-61.

¹³⁶Hettwer 75-76.

¹³⁷Hettwer 76.

Girls' studies were complemented by practical experience comprised of helping mothers of *kinderreiche* families manage day-to-day tasks and making clothes for the *Winterhilfswerk*.¹³⁸ This practical experience, combined with course content continually concentrating on home- and childcare, resulted in the most significant shortfall of the National Socialist education for girls, namely its total focus on praxis and absence of theory.¹³⁹ In other words, girls' education in Nazi Germany was really no more valuable than the theory-heavy education that had been in use before – the only 'success' lay in the fact that girls were indeed completely educated to run a home, just as Hitler wanted. Unfortunately this merely proved that his desire to see a *Pädagogikreform* was for the sole purpose of seeing his *Volksgemeinschaft* come to fruition rather than for the benefit of children. Lisa Pine summarizes this idea most effectively as follows:

The concepts of race, community and leader stood at the centre of the National Socialist *Weltanschauung*, and were directly applied to the principles of education, which was downgraded to a deterministic process of socialization. It was not directed at the benefit of the individual, but towards the creation of an entire generation of German youth that would be strong, prepared for sacrifice, and willing to undertake its responsibilities towards the 'national community', based on mass emotion, not rationality. As such, children were 'pedagogic objects', subjected to the arbitrariness of the system.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁸Flessau 91.

¹³⁹Flessau 93.

¹⁴⁰Pine, *Dissemination* 95.

Regrettably, the preparation of girls for their sole future task as mothers for the Reich is evidence that they were indeed nothing more than 'pedagogic objects' – a fact made no less obvious by the undisguised pedagogical objective for the female student: "Sie darf nie während ihrer ganzen Werbezeit aus der lebendigen Sphäre der Familie oder des Dienstes an ihr treten. Die erzieherische Gestalt ist die Mutter. Ein Teil ihrer Würde muß schon in der Mädchenerziehung sichtbar werden."¹⁴¹

¹⁴¹Stellrecht 165.

IV. Indoctrination Through Texts

A. School Readers

Alterations to the structure of schools and the division of boys and girls into gender-specific branches of the *Hitler Jugend* were not the only areas where the indoctrination of children in Nazi Germany was considered. Of paramount importance was the *content* of the instructional materials utilized by teachers and students in the classroom setting. As Christa Kamenetsky points out, books "were not only the most significant media of instruction but also of indoctrination"¹⁴² in National Socialist Germany – a stance which fits with the notion that

writing for children is usually purposeful, its intention being to foster in the child reader a positive apperception of some socio-cultural values which, it is assumed, are shared by the author and audience. These values include contemporary morality and ethics, a sense of what is valuable in the culture's past (what a particular contemporary social formation regards as the culture's centrally important traditions), and aspirations about the present and future. Since a culture's future is, to put it crudely, invested in its children, children's writers often take upon themselves the task of trying to mould audience attitudes into 'desirable' forms, which can mean either an attempt to perpetuate certain values or to resist socially dominant values which particular writers oppose.¹⁴³

¹⁴²Christa Kamenetsky, *Children's Literature in Hitler's Germany. The Cultural Policy of National Socialism* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1984) 51.

¹⁴³John Stephens, *Language and Ideology in Children's Literature* (New York: Longman Publishing, 1992) 3.

In the case of National Socialist literature for children, the propagation of the Nazi *Weltanschauung* was not an option – children were to be indoctrinated with the new ideology at all costs. This resulted in the use of both new literature written by National Socialists themselves, and older literature that (inadvertently) promoted Nazi ideals, i.e. authors whose work was to be used in schools were obliged to instill the new, state-approved ideas, while the works of earlier authors were made to fit a new purpose.

Nazi leaders were by no means oblivious to the potential of literature as a medium for the distribution of ideology. Their slogan: “*Das Buch – Unsere Waffe*” (The Book – Our Weapon)¹⁴⁴ openly demonstrates the faith they had in literature as a means of winning followers for the Nazi cause. Long before the first National Socialist directive on education, Hitler had noted that propaganda was to “precede far in advance of the organization and to win for the latter the human material to be utilized,”¹⁴⁵ and that “The task of propaganda lies not in a scientific training of the individual, but rather in directing the masses towards certain facts, events, necessities, etc., the purpose being to move their importance into the masses’ field of vision.”¹⁴⁶ These objectives were certainly not minimized when determining school reader content years later. In fact, the belief that “the young child is not in a position to carry out a sensible selection of the material that has been infiltrated in him”¹⁴⁷ served only to strengthen the National Socialist resolve to control what literature was to be read by youngsters.

¹⁴⁴Kamenetsky 51.

¹⁴⁵Hitler 846.

¹⁴⁶Hitler 231.

¹⁴⁷Hitler 615.

Readers were by no means a twentieth-century phenomenon – a distant ‘origin’ can be found in St. Anselm’s (1033-1109) eleventh-century *Elucidarium*, a book of general information for young students. The religious tract, *Der Seele Trost*, which was written by an anonymous German between 1478 and 1483, constitutes another piece of literature aimed specifically at school children, to be followed by works such as Jörg Wickram’s (1505-60) novel *Der jungen Knaben Spiel* in 1555, the entertaining *A Little Book for Children* by “T.W.” which has been dated to 1712, and John Newbery’s (1713-67) 1744 *A Little Pretty Pocket-Book*, from which English children’s literature is traditionally traced.¹⁴⁸ The use of literature in the classroom was, however, not made a matter of national importance until 1854 with the enactment of the Stiehl Ordinance, resulting in state regulation of educational materials in the Prussian classroom. This regulation consisted primarily of the *Königlich Preussische Auskunftsstelle für Schulwesen* (Royal Prussian Information Office for Schools) maintaining a list of approved works for study in school¹⁴⁹ with additional directives being issued concerning specific content, primarily in an effort to foster a strong spirit of nationalism among youngsters. The 1902 directive ‘Requirements of a Good German Reader for Elementary Schools,’ for example, declared that the content of school readers should never divert a child’s attention from “the Prussian state, the German fatherland and humanity as a whole.”¹⁵⁰ Textbooks brimmed with praise for the Hohenzollerns, hatred toward socialists and anarchists, and were mediated by teachers who themselves had

¹⁴⁸ Clifton Fadiman, “The Case for Children’s Literature,” *Signposts to Criticism of Children’s Literature*, ed. Robert Bator (Chicago: American Library Association, 1983) 9-10.

¹⁴⁹ R.H. Samuel and R. Hinton Thomas, *Education and Society in Modern Germany* (Westport: Greenwood, 1971) 71.

¹⁵⁰ Samuel and Thomas 71.

faced a barrage of propaganda in works such as the *History Textbook for Teachers' Training Colleges* (1898), which was permeated by Prussian and German interests, "to the exclusion of all European values"¹⁵¹

For the most part, Germany's defeat in 1918 spelled the end of public nationalism, and "it was quickly realised in many circles that an entirely new type of textbook was an indispensable basis for democratic school reform."¹⁵² In December 1919, Konrad Hänisch (1876-1925), the first Republican Prussian Minister of Education, issued a decree forbidding the use of old history textbooks and most readers that had been in use throughout Prussia. A new list of approved textbooks was formed and monitored by the *Staatliche Auskunftsstelle für Schulwesen* (State Information Office for Schools)¹⁵³ in accordance with Article 148 of the Weimar Constitution which defined "the spirit of international co-operation as an essential part of education."¹⁵⁴ Despite the wording of the Constitution, *völkisch* elements and pan-Germanism were already appearing in readers. Prussian teachers were ordered to promote German colonialism under an October 1919 decree, and a further decree in December of 1923 stated that the difficulties faced by Germans living abroad should be given special prominence in textbooks and teaching.¹⁵⁵ Though such uses of readers for political purposes certainly foreshadowed what was to come in the Third Reich, the extent to which readers were to be (ab)used was unprecedented.

¹⁵¹Samuel and Thomas 71.

¹⁵²Samuel and Thomas 73.

¹⁵³Samuel and Thomas 73.

¹⁵⁴Samuel and Thomas 73.

¹⁵⁵Samuel and Thomas 73-74.

When one considers the notion that schoolbooks are the medium through which children gain an understanding of their relationship to the world view present in their society,¹⁵⁶ the importance of school reader content cannot be brushed aside. In the case of Nazism, the goal of education was expressly "einen 'neuen Menschen' für seine Weltanschauung zu erziehen"¹⁵⁷ Speaking of both Germany's *NS*- and *DDR*-years, Jarmuła also notes:

In beiden Fällen bilden die Schulbuchtexte und dazu auch die Richtlinien der Erziehung das Mittel zur Indoktrination, Meinungsmanipulation und Bewußtseinslenkung. Unter einem guten Lesebuch verstanden die beiden totalitären Systeme das politisch-weltanschauliche Buch, das unter dem Deckmantel der Erziehung und Bildung der Vorbereitung der jugendlichen Leser auf die jeweilige Ideologie diente.¹⁵⁸

The question was, how would this be possible? The answer lies in the necessity of two forms of drastic action, the first being the creation of new, ideologically suitable readers. As is aptly summarized in Reiner Wild's *Geschichte der deutschen Kinder- und Jugendliteratur*, Nazi seizure of power was not without effect on children's literature:

Mit der "Machtübernahme" durch die Nationalsozialisten am 31. 1. 1933 begann für die Kinderliteratur ein Ausgrenzungsprozeß, der nur eine politisch genehme Lektüre für junge Leser übrigließ. Autoren wurden außer Landes vertrieben, andere – wie Erich Kästner – mit Schreibverbot in Deutschland und später mit einem generellen Veröffentlichungsverbot

¹⁵⁶ Cecylia Jarmuła, "Die Sprache des Totalitarismus. Schulbücher in der Nazi- und der DDR-Zeit," *Studia Linguistica*, ed. Lesław Cirko (Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, 2001) 95.

¹⁵⁷ Jarmuła 95.

¹⁵⁸ Jarmuła 95.

belegt. Horst Heidtmann meint sogar, daß bereits vor der Machtergreifung auf dem Jugendschriftensektor engagierte Pädagogen und Volksbibliothekare über den "Anti-Schund-Kampf" in die Kulturpolitik der NSDAP eingebunden waren und ihren Beitrag zur "Ausmerzungen" wichtiger Teile der deutschen Literatur leisteten: "1933 fanden die neuen Machthaber bereitwillige Unterstützung bei der Gleichschaltung des literarischen Lebens, bei der Aussonderung von Büchern aus Buchhandlungen und Bibliotheken."¹⁵⁹

The new ideology may have resulted in bans and even exile for some authors, but others found themselves thrust into the limelight:

Für eine große Zahl von Schriftstellern, die schon während der zwanziger Jahre Bücher völkisch-nationaler Couleur verfaßt hatten und mit zu den ideologischen Wegbereitern des Nationalsozialismus gehörten, brach jetzt eine Zeit des publizistischen Erfolges an. Ungehindert von Stimmen der Kritik und des Widerspruchs entfalteten sie ihre weltanschauliche Propaganda und produzierten ein der nationalsozialistischen Führung genehmes 'Kinder- und Jugendschrifttum'.¹⁶⁰

Discussion of reader content began immediately after the *Machtübernahme*, leading to the *Richtlinien zur Schaffung neuer Lesebücher* on 17 September 1934. However, "it took time to write new textbooks and teaching aids to replace those which had been withdrawn and destroyed in 1933."¹⁶¹ To bridge the time between the removal of

¹⁵⁹Reiner Wild, ed., *Geschichte der deutschen Kinder- und Jugendliteratur* (Stuttgart: J.B. Metzler, 1990) 266.

¹⁶⁰Wild 266.

¹⁶¹Burleigh and Wippermann 212.

'unsuitable' textbooks (which will be discussed shortly) and the publication of 'suitable' ones, a series of *Ergänzungshefte* were created, which embodied National/Socialist ideology and were to be used to aid the teacher in 'correctly interpreting' texts from the Weimar period.¹⁶² What was desired was a strictly National Socialist reader, and steps to achieve this goal were taken at the onset of Nazi rule. Philip Bouhler (1899-1945) – Director of the Party Censorship Office and the one responsible for supervising textbooks for public schools – declared that 'weeding' through old textbooks would not prove sufficient, but that a new reader was the only solution, with the following Nazi ideological principles on prominent display: 1. Blood and Soil, 2. Leadership and Followership, 3. Honor and Loyalty, 4. Service and Sacrifice, and 5. Struggle and Work.¹⁶³ Thus the first NS reader appeared in 1935 for pupils in the fifth and sixth grades. This was followed by a 1936 volume for the second grade, a 1937 volume for the third and fourth grades and, finally, a 1939/1940 volume for the seventh and eighth grades. Secondary schools saw the creation of a *Deutsches Lesebuch für Jungen* and a *Deutsches Lesebuch für Mädchen*, each consisting of five volumes.¹⁶⁴ However, 3 April 1939 saw a decree detailing plans for a single school reader of six volumes that would ensure an absolute standard for all schools – the *Deutsche Lesebuch für Volksschulen*.¹⁶⁵ This was not a new idea – the name *Reichslesebuch* had been coined shortly after the First World War, but, as Peter Hasubek points out: "Was um 1920 noch als eine Unmöglichkeit erscheint, wird 15 Jahre später durch die autoritäre Politik des

¹⁶²Peter Hasubek, *Das deutsche Lesebuch in der Zeit des Nationalsozialismus. Ein Beitrag zur Literaturpädagogik zwischen 1933 und 1945* (Hannover: Hermann Schroedel, 1972) 30.

¹⁶³Kamenetsky 187.

¹⁶⁴Hasubek 30.

¹⁶⁵Hasubek 30.

nationalsozialistischen Herrschaftssystems greifbare Wirklichkeit."¹⁶⁶ The standardized reader was to be available in twenty-two editions, all of which would be comprised of two-thirds '*Kernteil*,' plus one-third '*Heimatteil*' – a section that was unique to the geographical area in which the reader would be used, not to mention an integral component of *Blut-und-Boden* instruction.¹⁶⁷

The *Lesebuch für Volksschulen* proves interesting ground, particularly when one considers the content. These texts diverted from literary ones:

Es erscheint methodisch nicht vertretbar, in erster Linie zu fragen, welche Dichter und welche dichterischen Texte im Lesebuch dargeboten werden, da diese Fragestellung nicht den Wesenskern der unterrichtlichen Intention der Lesebücher trifft. [...] Wichtiger ist aber die Frage, ob das [...] Bildungsziel, die Erziehung zum politischen Menschen, durch die Textauswahl adäquat verfolgt und erreicht wird.¹⁶⁸

The Nazis did not seek to use readers to teach literature as an art form, but rather to simply use literary texts to their own ends. This is demonstrated by the fact that publishers followed a list of three criteria to be utilized when selecting 'appropriate' texts for use in readers: "1. Ideologischer Wert, 2. Aktualitätsgrad, 3. Spracherzieherischer Wert."¹⁶⁹ Along with these criteria, three epochs were to be concentrated on, namely 1914 onwards; secondly, the time up to the beginning of the nineteenth century, particularly the Romantic period; and thirdly, the early Germanic

¹⁶⁶Hasubek 31.

¹⁶⁷Hasubek 31.

¹⁶⁸Hasubek 141.

¹⁶⁹Hasubek 142.

period, with focus on the *Heldendichtung*. By following such guidelines, German Classicism was largely passed over, as were works by foreign authors.¹⁷⁰ Even a cursory appraisal of reader content clearly demonstrates that to the Nazis, ideology was more important than the author. For example, of the 82 pieces of prose in the fifth volume of *Deutsches Lesebuch für Jungen*, the most prominent authors are: Hitler, Rosenberg, Hans Grimm, Finckh, Hohlbaum, Kahle, Schauwecker, Steguweit, Dietrich, etc.¹⁷¹ The reader *Deutsches Lesewerk für Mittelschulen, 2. Klasse* provides yet another example of the lack of quality literature found in NS readers, with Adolf Hitler the most prominent of approximately thirty-five authors.¹⁷² Even if prominent German authors were to be found, this did not guarantee that the texts selected were of the highest quality – instead, only texts appropriate in the National Socialist context were to be used.¹⁷³ Any shortfall in ideologically-appropriate texts was compensated for by editors who freely stooped to “inventing poems by listing them anonymously under such titles as ‘A Runic Inscription,’”¹⁷⁴ providing further evidence to support the sentiment that “Das Literarisch-Wertvolle, wie es die Bestimmungen von 1923 forderten, wird vom Nationalsozialismus ersetzt durch das National-Wertvolle.”¹⁷⁵

Some classics did meet with NS standards, and were permitted both in readers and as works in their own right. These included works such as the Grimm Brothers’ fairy tales, Storm’s *Der kleine Häwweilmann*, Hoffmann’s *Struwwelpeter*, Busch’s *Max*

¹⁷⁰Hasubek 142.

¹⁷¹Hasubek 148.

¹⁷²Hasubek 146.

¹⁷³Hasubek 146.

¹⁷⁴Kamenetsky 191.

¹⁷⁵Hasubek 142.

und Moritz, Andersen's *Fairy Tales*, and Lagerlöf's *Nils Holgersson*, along with German chapbooks from the Middle Ages and Germanic legends. All of these works stemmed from what the Nazis labeled the 'German cultural area,' and were declared *völkisch* literature.¹⁷⁶ Johanna Spyri's (1827-1901) *Heidi* (1880-81) also certainly topped the list of 'acceptable works.' Christa Kamenetsky notes that the

critics praised the work as *German* in spirit, on account of its natural simplicity and spontaneity, and its closeness to nature. In her unspoiled character, Heidi might present a model to German children, they said, as she was joyous, humble, and truthful, unselfish, and 'life accepting' in her ways. Also, she had a strong 'social consciousness' as she aided poor Clara and cared for her grouchy old grandfather.¹⁷⁷

Yet not all critics shared such a positive conviction. Some argued that the book's references to the Bible, sermons, and pious elements should be removed in order for it to better correspond with *NS* ideology. Thus even the classics were subject to censorship – in some cases, 'acceptable' abridgments were permitted on the shelves while the original works were removed from circulation.¹⁷⁸

B. Magazines

Along with the development and publication of new readers, the Nazis saw to it that children's extracurricular reading was also thoroughly infused with the 'correct' ideology. The children's magazine *Hilf mit!* was distributed in schools, providing

¹⁷⁶Kamenetsky 139.

¹⁷⁷Kamenetsky 141.

¹⁷⁸Kamenetsky 141-42.

additional reading for the twelve years of Nazi dictatorship with more than 3 million issues in circulation.¹⁷⁹ It is essential to note: "Eine Funktion von *Hilf mit* war es, die Schüler dafür zu gewinnen, die Volksgemeinschaft als 'Bluts-, Wehr- und Schicksalsgemeinschaft' zu begreifen."¹⁸⁰ In order to achieve this goal, texts whose content dealt with saga-like wars, genealogy, heroes of the First World War, Germans living abroad, 'noble' animals, nature, and health were carefully selected. Teachers were not oblivious to the magazine's purpose, having been instructed with the following:

Als eine Kampftruppe, die dem Führer geholfen hat, Volk und Reich zu erobern, hat der Nationalsozialistische Lehrerbund den Geist der unmittelbaren, lebendigen und fördernden Anteilnahme am Schicksal der Nation in die Schule hineingetragen. Dieser Geist konnte sich nicht lange mit dem Schema des Lehrplanes begnügen. Er mußte die Form sprengen, und so entstand als zusätzliche nationalpolitische Erziehungsform, ausgehend von dem Inhalt der gleich nach der Machtübernahme vom NSLB. gegründeten Schülerzeitschrift 'Hilf-mit!' jene frische und tätige Bewegung in der Schule, die seither Jahr für Jahr in den 'Hilf-mit!'-Wettbewerben die deutsche Jugend am Werke sieht, sich die weltanschaulichen, politischen und wirtschaftlichen Probleme unseres völkischen Lebensbereiches kraft eigenen Erlebens und eigenen Darstellungsvermögens in Werkstücken, Zeichnungen, Aufsätzen usw. zu erarbeiten.¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁹Wild 282.

¹⁸⁰Wild 283.

¹⁸¹Erziehung 15.

Younger children were able to enjoy extracurricular propaganda by reading the *Deutsche Jugendburg* magazine, which was comprised of reports on technology, farming, genealogy, tales from the First World War, Germanic history, sagas, along with handicrafts, puzzles, sports, and games. In comparison with *Hilf mit!*, *Deutsche Jugendburg* was somewhat simplified, but was no less lacking in anti-Semitic undertones. Those authors and editors working on *Deutsche Jugendburg* were in fact often the same as those working on *Hilf mit!*.¹⁸²

C. Censorship of Texts

The second method by which the Nazis were aiming to achieve their goal of indoctrination through literature was to censor texts that had been in circulation prior to the 1933 takeover, as well as to screen any publications following it. The goal of a cover-to-cover saturation of readers with National Socialist ideology¹⁸³ may have seemed impossible to some, yet within four short years, the Nazis were able to develop "the most complex and sophisticated censorship apparatus for controlling children's literature that Germany had ever experienced in her entire history."¹⁸⁴ Control of children's literature fell under the *Reichsschrifttumskammer* (Reich Literature Chamber), with duties divided between the State, represented by Josef Goebbels, and the Party, represented by Alfred Rosenberg (1893-1946).¹⁸⁵ Reich Minister of Sciences, Education, and Folk Culture Bernhard Rust (1883-1945) was placed in charge of all literature for public schools and libraries effective 1935, and he was made responsible

¹⁸²Wild 283.

¹⁸³Flessau 97.

¹⁸⁴Kamenetsky 243.

¹⁸⁵Kamenetsky 236.

for heading 48 regional offices for school libraries and several hundreds under them. Excluding those under Rust, the *Reichsschrifttumskammer* supervised 2,500 publishing houses, 23,000 bookstores, and the 3,000 authors who were approved for publication in the Third Reich. It also saw to the screening of approximately 20,000 newly-published books per year, and the 1,000,000 books per year that circulated in trade.¹⁸⁶

Magnitude aside, it is worth mentioning that the Nazis referred to censorship not simply as 'censorship,' but as 'cultural guidance.'¹⁸⁷ Under this policy of 'cultural guidance' the Nazis apportioned themselves a licence to destroy. For example, the first National Socialist book-burning ceremony took place on 10 May 1933 in the public square of not one city, but of Cologne, Bonn, Frankfurt am Main, Munich, Nuremberg, Würzburg, and Berlin. It is estimated that over the twelve-year span of Nazi dictatorship, approximately one third of all library holdings in Germany were destroyed in this process.¹⁸⁸ Such censorship was not, however, simply confined to the first years of Nazi dictatorship, but rather existed as an ongoing process until 1945. *Reichsminister* Josef Goebbels maintained a series of 'black lists' (i.e. indexes of 'un-völkisch' works, including those for children),¹⁸⁹ and *Reichsminister* Rust encouraged teachers and librarians to regularly sift through all holdings and remove any 'un-völkisch' elements.

¹⁸⁶Kamenetsky 238.

¹⁸⁷Kamenetsky 52.

¹⁸⁸Kamenetsky 31, 34.

¹⁸⁹It is interesting to note that in 1940, Goebbels decided that the 'cultural guidance' up to that point had not been sufficient. To resolve the 'oversight,' he compiled a list of newly censored books to be removed from circulation. The list was 169 typewritten pages long. See Kamenetsky 244.

D. Criteria for Texts

Josef Prestel produced a School Library Plan in 1933, followed by Hans Maurer's 1936-37 book *Jugend und Buch im Neuen Reich*.¹⁹⁰ In this work, Maurer defined the new goals of *völkisch* literature on behalf of the Reich Youth Library in Berlin and the Hitler Youth Organization as follows:

We Expect of Good Books That They Will:

1. Arouse among children an enthusiasm for the heroes of sagas, legends and history, for the soldiers of the great wars, the *Führer* and the New Germany, so as to strengthen their love of the fatherland and give them new ideals to live by.
2. Show the beauty of the German landscape.
3. Focus on the fate of children of German ethnic groups living abroad and emphasize their yearning for the Reich.
4. Deal with the love of nature and promote nature crafts.
5. Relate old German myths, folktales and legends, in a language reflecting the original folk tradition as closely as possible.
6. Give practical advice and help to the Hitler Youth, both in relation to recreational programs and camp activities.¹⁹¹

Despite such guidelines, it was not until 1937 that the *Nationalsozialistische Lehrerbund* (NSLB – National Socialist League of Teachers), headed by Rust, set up criteria for *völkisch* literature.¹⁹² Rust's *Grundliste für Schülerbüchereien der Volksschulen*

¹⁹⁰Kamenetsky 267-68.

¹⁹¹Kamenetsky 55-6.

¹⁹²Kamenetsky 53-54.

outlined contents for 'core books' to be held in children's libraries.¹⁹³ These lists went further than Maurer's guidelines in that the racial bias was strengthened, as was the desire that sagas and legends should not only reflect the archaic language and instill pride in Germanic heroes, but that these heroes "should also convey to the young reader the need to accept one's fate with an attitude of confidence, an 'inner victory,' regardless of the outcome of a given battle."¹⁹⁴

Rust's 1937 list was not to be the final one. In 1939 Eduard Rothmund outlined the literary-political position for the NSLB in his report *Das Jugendbuch in der deutschen Schule*. Therein one even finds the following criteria for picture books:

- "1. Das Bilderbuch hat sich von der übermäßigen Betonung des Städtischen ab- und dem Ländlichen zuzuwenden.
2. Das Bilderbuch hat das Kind nicht als Sonderwesen, sondern als Gemeinschaftswesen zu berücksichtigen.
3. Das Bilderbuch hat das übermäßig behütete Kind abzulehnen und die Selbständigkeit des Kindes zu betonen.
4. Das Bilderbuch hat sich gegen individuelle Willkür zu wenden und für rassische Zucht einzutreten.
5. Das Bilderbuch hat das Kind vom sprunghaften Dranherumnippen an den Dingen der Welt zu einem schauenden Erfassen der Welt, von verantwortungslosen heruntäudelnden Träumen zur Stärkung seiner Anschauungskraft und zur Tatbereitschaft zu führen."¹⁹⁵

¹⁹³Kamenetsky 270.

¹⁹⁴Kamenetsky 56.

¹⁹⁵Quoted in Wild 266-67.

Strict control of picture books may strike one as extreme, but it merely reinforces Nazi belief in their slogan, "*Das Buch – Unsere Waffe.*"¹⁹⁶ Sadly, the pursuit of indoctrination came at the expense of individuality among children: "Ultimately, children's literature was no longer meant to benefit the individual child but only the 'folk community' and the state. Outside of this goal, neither children nor books were thought to have a purpose and justification for existence."¹⁹⁷

¹⁹⁶Kamenetsky 51.

¹⁹⁷Kamenetsky 311.

V. Shaping the Ideal Nazi Female Through Texts

Nazi use of school readers as a tool for politically-correct education may not strike one as particularly surprising, yet thorough analyses of how the texts were utilized to promote socially acceptable roles for children and adolescents remain limited.¹⁹⁸ Having already established the socio-historical context of motherhood in the Third Reich and some of the education reforms that were clearly aimed at channeling youth into service for the *Volksgemeinschaft*, the remainder of this study is centered around a deeper discussion of how efforts to control deliberate school reader content (which have already been demonstrated) included an attempt to socialize girls into becoming the 'ideal' Nazi woman. Several examples of poems and short stories found in readers and the *Hilf mit!* magazine will be examined in an effort to answer the following questions: What types of female role models are presented in the texts? How are they described? Do the girls/women presented in the texts meet with NS ideology concerning a woman's functional role in the *Volksgemeinschaft*? Answers to these questions will demonstrate in part the extent to which reading material permitted for school children under National Socialism met with NS-ideology, but will also result in a better understanding of precisely what characteristics the 'ideal woman' was expected to display.

A. Importance of Family

The selection of 'politically-correct' texts for use in school readers constituted a mammoth project, yet an essential one. As has already been discussed, great efforts were made to control the content of readers in order to instill the 'correct'

¹⁹⁸See Hasubek, Flessau, and Pine for the most extensive studies.

Weltanschauung in children. Literature, though proclaimed to be the "cultural will of the people" by *Reichsminister* Josef Goebbels,¹⁹⁹ was in fact not used as a product of the people's will, but as a socializing directive from political leaders. Although the concept of literature bearing a socializing function seems rather obvious, it is nevertheless important to pause for a moment on the idea that the language contained within any given text is what ultimately results in the socializing function. In their book *Language and Control in Children's Literature*, Murray Knowles and Kirsten Malmkjær point out that with regard to the discourses found in children's literature,

language is a powerful socialising agent, because it is through language that the child learns about the social world, about social customs, institutions and hierarchies. The language of social texts – including those which we read to our children or give them to read for themselves – is therefore a particularly effective agent in promoting the acceptance by the child of these customs, institutions and hierarchies.²⁰⁰

This idea was certainly no less relevant to Germany under National Socialism than it is today. However, in the case of the National Socialist, the foremost aim was always to promote a child's acceptance of the greater *Volksgemeinschaft* and his or her function therein. For this reason, it is not particularly surprising that the family, as the primary building block of the *Volksgemeinschaft*, is on prominent display throughout NS school readers, and that the ideal family is portrayed in very positive terms. Motherhood, in particular, would logically have to be presented in the best light and in a most

¹⁹⁹Kamenetsky 51.

²⁰⁰Murray Knowles and Kirsten Malmkjær, *Language and Control in Children's Literature* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996) 44.

convincing manner in order to 'sell' a girl her future role in the Third Reich. In this vein, Lisa Pine notes that:

the family was portrayed on countless occasions, often in the form of short poems and short stories, apparently in their own right, that is, without overt Nazi propaganda attached to them. Yet, even these seemingly innocent poems about motherhood and the family often had political undercurrents. For example, the choice of words used to describe each family member accorded quite exactly to Nazi ideals – always the 'goodness' of the mother, the strength of the father, the action and 'pride of the brother, the passivity of the sister were portrayed, all as a description of 'a good type of family'. Illustrations of a mother surrounded by four loving children were not uncommon, and were frequently accompanied by a short text or poem about the mother and her various duties in waking up early, preparing breakfast for her family, tending the baby, cooking lunch, looking after the children, helping them with their homework and so on, but never being tired or morose, despite all this work. Such images clearly mirrored the National Socialist idealization of the mother.²⁰¹

B. Roles and Functions

In order to ensure girls' acceptance of their difficult and limited future in the private sphere, it was first of all essential to convince them that a life in the home with a family

²⁰¹Pine, *Dissemination* 97-98.

was precisely what nature had preordained for them. Ideologists concocted theories along this line to suit the interests of the Reich, as the following example demonstrates:

Jedes Mädchen, das aus der häuslichen Welt entfernt wird, verliert so schnell sich selbst mit dieser Welt. Das Mädchen, die Frau ist als ein Naturwesen viel stärker in ihrer Welt verwurzelt, viel empfindlicher für jede lebensgesetzliche Störung als der Mann. Ist die Ordnung irgendwo zerstört, kommt das Ganze gleich in Unordnung.²⁰²

However, using such logic was not necessarily an effective method by which girls could be convinced of their 'natural role.' Indoctrination courtesy of curricula changes and *BDM* activities was crucial in creating a pleasant packaging for a limited existence, but school readers played a special role in Nazi persuasion tactics by including texts in which a woman's deviance from the prescribed norm spells a hopeless battle against the 'order of nature.' For example, a reader for secondary schools contains a short story entitled "Die Ordnung der Natur," in which an impoverished husband spends his days working in the fields while his wife cooks in the house. Dissatisfied with the arrangement, the husband says to his wife one morning, "Du hast es doch recht bequem bei dem bißchen Kochen, während ich mich auf dem Felde schinden und placken muß."²⁰³ The wife suggests a trading of roles, and a day of chaos ensues – attempting to prepare his favorite dish of *Reisbrei*, he ignores the cow's calls. Finally checking on the animal, he discovers that she needs to be fed. The farmer leads the cow from the mountainside onto the home's straw roof to graze, and to be on the 'safe side,' ties a

²⁰²Stellrecht 163.

²⁰³Oskar Dähnhardt, "Die Ordnung der Natur," *Ewiges Deutschland. Deutsches Hausbuch für höhere Schulen. Mädchenausgabe*, eds. A. Caselmann, A. Lämmermeyr, E. Puchtler, erster Band, 4. Auflage (Bamberg: C.C. Buchner, 1943) 157.

rope around her neck, which he then drops through the chimney, tying the other end to his own leg. Feeling smug that the cow cannot fall to her death, he finds that the rice has bubbled over in the kitchen. Starting afresh with a new pot of water, the farmer is oblivious to the fact that the cow has reached the edge of the roof in her search for tasty herbs. The cow steps off the roof, hanging herself and leaving the farmer suspended in the chimney over his pot of boiling rice. In the nick of time, the wife returns from the fields, cutting the rope to free the cow and pulling her husband from what was supposed to be lunch. Before the wife has a chance to scold her husband, the story ends with the husband's words, "Künftig bleibst du wieder zu Hause und kochst und ich gehe zu Feld und ackere. Man soll die Ordnung der Natur nicht verkehren."²⁰⁴

One may question the validity of this story's claim that the reason why swapping the spheres failed was because it 'went against nature.' After all, chances are that the husband was trained since boyhood for his work and the wife for hers, and one could logically conclude that, for the purposes of this particular story, had the husband learned the basics of home life earlier, no catastrophe would have befallen him. However, such an argument had no place in National Socialist ideology, as the possibility of one overcoming 'nature' undermined the pseudo-scientific theory of Social Darwinism. This was of primary concern with regard to race – for example, according to Nazi thought, a person of distant Jewish ancestry who was fully integrated into Christian or even secular society was still a Jew, and no amount of integration could alter or remove his or her 'Jewishness.' Lisa Pine discusses this concept by summarizing a children's fable in which a cuckoo meets a nightingale. Upset that he cannot sing as well as the

²⁰⁴Dähnhardt 159.

nightingale, the cuckoo decides that his incapacity for song is only due to him not having been raised to sing beautifully. His mate has the clever idea of laying her eggs in the nest of another bird so that her young will learn to sing well. Though hatched in a hedge sparrow's nest, the young cuckoo grows healthily, but it becomes more and more apparent with the passage of time that he is different from the hedge sparrows with whom he was raised – he flies differently, he cannot sing, and in short, he grows up into a completely normal cuckoo.²⁰⁵ Though the racial implications of this fable are crystal clear, implications concerning the 'order of nature' in terms of gender may also be drawn, i.e. according to Nazi thought, a man raised to do 'women's work' will never be successful at his task, just the same as a woman raised to do 'men's work' – 'nature' will not be altered or reversed.

In addition to convincing girls of their natural aptitude for life in the private sphere and the importance of their contribution to a continuity in the 'order in nature,' it was essential that reading material provide girls with relevant examples that could serve as models for them. This was naturally best achieved not by limiting the content of reading material to stories and poems on 'the order of nature,' but by including texts on ideology-appropriate females in a similar age-range to those girls who read the texts in school.

One example of such a text is entitled "Unsere Arbeitsmaiden," in which the day-to-day life of girls completing their work service year (*Landjahr*) is described. A serene trip along a canal near Oldenburg permits the author to describe the beauty of the July landscape, small villages clustered with tiny houses, and children enjoying a swim –

²⁰⁵Pine, *Dissemination* 102.

all on the way to the *Arbeitsdienstlager von Westrhauderfehn* for women. The girls are portrayed as active, hardworking young women who bring happiness to the people with whom they work. Their days begin at six o'clock with morning sports, after which they eat breakfast and plan the day's work of peat farming, helping with young children, cooking, cleaning, and so on. The *Arbeitsmaiden* are described only in the most glowing terms, as the following example demonstrates:

"Ohne meine Frieda wäre ich mit meinen vier Kindern als arme, von Gicht geplagte Frau verloren", erzählt uns die erste Siedlerin, die wir besuchen. "Denn schließlich, wer hätte sich früher um uns gekümmert und uns die schwere Arbeit freiwillig von den Schultern genommen? Meine Kinder haben sich so an Frieda gewöhnt (die ihnen ja auch heimlich manchen Leckerbissen zusteckt), daß sie von ihr wie von einer sehr, sehr lieben 'Tante' sprechen. Ich habe nur die Hoffnung, daß sie recht lange bei uns bleibt."²⁰⁶

The author goes on to point out that Frieda does all of her work cheerfully despite personal setbacks: "Friedas Aufgabe ist keine leichte, aber da sie mit Lust übernommen ist, wird sie auch spielend gelöst. Sie hat es am schwersten von ihren Kameradinnen, wie wir uns überzeugten, und doch erfüllt sie ihren Pflichtenkreis mit gleicher Freudigkeit und Anhänglichkeit wie alle anderen."²⁰⁷ In other words, no girl is unable to fulfill her 'duties' – instead, every young woman can do so with vigor and joy. In fact, the *Arbeitsmaiden* are so dedicated, energetic and pleasant that, according to the author, the

²⁰⁶ Dr. Weskamp, "Unsere Arbeitsmaiden," *Hilf mit!*, May 1937: 328.

²⁰⁷ Weskamp 328.

smallholders share the following opinion of them: "Etwas Neues, Unerwartetes ist in ihren Daseinskampf gekommen. Eine Aufmunterung, ein reiner und schöner Glaube an die große Schicksalsgemeinschaft, die ihr unsichtbar Band um alle schlingt, ein Bekenntnis zum Blute ist."²⁰⁸ All of this is supported by photos showing smiling girls setting off on bicycles for a day in the fields, serving soup to host families, working in gardens, raking straw, playing with children, and singing as a choir. What is not stated in the article is that the *Arbeitsmaiden* formed not much more than a hardworking group of over-glorified baby-sitters and unpaid farm hands.

"Unsere Arbeitsmaiden" contains numerous elements that cultivate the National Socialist concept of female existence. Images of the idyllic countryside *en route* to the work camp are accompanied by descriptions of children swimming and older people fishing. Even the little houses described create "einen freundlichen und sauberen Eindruck."²⁰⁹ Such images were important in depicting the sense of overall serenity, happiness, naturalness, and health that was considered so desirable for the female sphere. Yet what is of even greater interest is the careful use of specific vocabulary to reinforce an ideal model in the text. Words such as *Frühspport*, *Tagesplan*, *Musik*, *Fahrrad*, and *Aufgabe* suggest an active and healthy lifestyle for the *Arbeitsmaiden*, who are also described as "gesund an Leib und Seele."²¹⁰ A joyful mood in the face of hard work is set by vocabulary such as *mit Lust übernommen*, *immer lachende Kraft*, *spielend*, *froh und glücklich gestimmt*, and *Freudigkeit*, while a close sense of nature is fostered through words like *Schäferhund*, *Gartenland*, *Kühe*, *Pferd*, *Schweine*, *Wetter*,

²⁰⁸Weskamp 329.

²⁰⁹Weskamp 328.

²¹⁰Weskamp 328.

*Torf, Moor, Naturburschen, Bauer, Getreide, and Land.*²¹¹ The *Arbeitsmaiden* are particularly helpful and hardworking – an image rendered by the redundant use of expressions such as *große Hilfe, nutzbringend für das deutsche Volk, sich um uns kümmern, die schwere Arbeit freiwillig von den Schultern nehmen, and ihren Pflichtenkreis erfüllen*, as well as words like *Anhänglichkeit, tüchtig, emsig, schmuck, blitzend, and Sauberkeit.*²¹² The young women are also bound up in the new *Volksgemeinschaft* – an image created by vocabulary such as *Bekenntnis zum Blute, Daseinskampf, das deutsche Volk, Deutschland, and Zukunft.*²¹³ Even the title “Unsere Arbeitsmaiden” suggests a collective approach to work in the *Volksgemeinschaft*. All of this is underscored by vocabulary pertaining to life in the private sphere, including words like *Haus, Mutter, Mütterchen, Tante, Kind, Kaffeetafel, Tee, Kartoffel, and das stille Wirken.*²¹⁴

The *Arbeitsmaiden* were by no means the only youthful models portrayed in an effort to socialize girls into their future role, nor is “Unsere Arbeitsmaiden” the only text containing vocabulary that lent itself to the National Socialist concept of female existence. Girls were also provided with models of young women who met the Nazi ideal through stories such as “Inge wird NS.-Schwester.” In this story, Inge has fallen and broken a leg, and she must spend some time in a hospital. Cranky as a result of her infirmity, she initially rejects the care and attempt at friendship made by her nurse,

²¹¹Weskamp 328-29.

²¹²Weskamp 328-29. It is interesting to note that the author goes so far as to describe one worker in the following terms: “Überall schaltet und waltet die emsige, kleine Hausfrau” (Weskamp 329) – a phrase strikingly reminiscent of Friedrich Schiller’s words “Und drinnen waltet / Die züchtige Hausfrau.” See for details: Friedrich Schiller, “Das Lied von der Glocke,” *Das große deutsche Gedichtbuch. Von 1500 bis zur Gegenwart*, ed. Karl Otto Conrady (München: Artemis, 1991) 192.

²¹³Weskamp 328-29.

²¹⁴Weskamp 328-29.

Käthe. Käthe's persistence in both her duties and her pleasant attitude finally win Inge over.

Schwester Käthe brauchte hinfert nur ein trauriges Gesicht zu machen, sofort unterdrückte Inge alle Zornesausbrüche gegen das langweilige, schmerzhaft Liegen im Bett. Es war nicht immer leicht. Aber Tag für Tag hatte Inge die junge Schwester als leuchtendes Beispiel vor Augen. Alle in dem großen Krankenhause liebten sie, die stets da war, wenn man sie brauchte, die niemals die Geduld verlor, immer lächelte und half und stets auf ihrem Posten war. Inge kam aus dem Staunen nicht heraus. Da hatte sie immer gedacht, Schwestern seien alt und hausbacken, sie lebten im Krankenhaus wie in einem Gefängnis. Dabei war diese Schwester Käthe so lustig und ausgelassen und so modern wie ein forsches Sportmädchen. Als Inge langsam mit Lauf- und Streckübungen für ihren kranken Fuß beginnen mußte, stellte es sich heraus, daß Schwester Käthe eine ausgezeichnete Turnerin war, die einfach jede Sportart beherrschte.²¹⁵

When asked whether there is anything she cannot do, Käthe responds: "Nun, ich bemühe mich, soviel wie möglich zu können, man lernt täglich an allen Ecken und Enden dazu, wenn man nur will."²¹⁶ Her idealism is followed by Inge's admission that she wants to be like Käthe, and when asked how to do just that, Käthe states: "Nichts

²¹⁵Dagmar Ohlsen, "Inge wird NS.-Schwester," *Hilf mit!* August 1938: 344.

²¹⁶Ohlsen, "Inge" 344.

leichter als das [...]. Komm zum Deutschen Schwesterndienst und werde NS.-Schwester."²¹⁷

While the article's recruitment tactics are of interest in their own right, what is more significant for the purpose of this study is the overwhelming idealization of Käthe. She is the impeccable manifestation of the Nazi ideal – she is healthy, caring, patient, hardworking and, having admitted the following about her profession to Inge: “Alle Mütterlichkeit, alle Handfertigkeiten und hauswirtschaftlichen Talente kann sie voll und ganz entwickeln,”²¹⁸ she serves as the perfect example of a woman who, though working outside of her home, is still happily restricted to the private sphere. Not surprisingly, the story ends with Inge telling her parents, “Meine Krankheit hatte doch auch ihr Gutes, ich weiß jetzt, was ich werden soll. Ich werde: NS.-Schwester,”²¹⁹ This provides the young reader not only with a happy ending, but also with the conviction that, after Nurse Käthe's example, working as a nurse is the perfect job for any girl, and that the hefty list of attributes ascribed to Käthe are entirely within reach.

C. Education

In addition to providing girls with young models of the female ideal, it was also important to lead girls to believe that the watered-down education they were receiving was in fact entirely suitable, fun, and rewarding – a task aided by reading material. One example of such a text is an article entitled “Das singende Schloß,” which describes what a typical visitor to the *Reichsführerinnenschule des BDM* in Potsdam would

²¹⁷Ohlsen, “Inge” 344.

²¹⁸Ohlsen, “Inge” 344.

²¹⁹Ohlsen, “Inge” 345.

encounter. Compared to a paradise hidden behind walls, the school teems with lush gardens, a deep sense of camaraderie, and the singing of songs with words such as "Wenn uns der eigene Bruder vergaß, uns geht die Sonne nicht unter..."²²⁰ The courses included studies in handicrafts, home care, history, *Heimatkunde*, racial studies, and drama, not to mention folk dancing, sports, and gymnastic exercises. Visitors were not left in doubt as to the practical applications of what the girls learned at the school:

Alles wird getan, um unseren jungen Führerinnen in der kurzen Zeit soviel zu geben, wie nur möglich. Man wandert, man arbeitet, man liest und spricht, man turnt und singt, tanzt und musiziert, doch was die Hauptsache ist, man erlebt dieses alles in einer wundervollen kameradschaftlichen Gemeinschaft.

Lebensstark, lebensbejahend gehen unsere Führerinnen des BDM zurück ins Reich – sie sind jung und voll ungebändigter Kraft – ihnen gehört die Zukunft.²²¹

What is left unsaid is how limited that future will be. Instead, the typical Nazi *Mädchenerziehung* is portrayed as productive and fun – a portrayal reinforced even in the article's title, "Das singende Schloß."

A further example of a text aimed at providing relevant examples of 'ideal' adolescent females is entitled "Ausgerechnet Lehrerin." Centered around a twenty-year-old young woman who is both a teacher and a *BDM* leader, the article consists of a discussion by the young woman of her work. She indicates that teaching is

²²⁰Dagmar Ohlsen, "Das singende Schloß," *Hilf mit!* August 1937: 340.

²²¹Ohlsen, "Schloß" 341.

a 'natural' occupation for women: "Es muß wohl von Natur aus im Wesen der Frau liegen, ist doch jede Mutter die erste Lehrerin ihres Kindes und noch immer die beste."²²² This text, as with "Das singende Schloß," praises Nazi *Mädchenerziehung* – girls are free to enjoy their schooling, to take pride in their work (even if it consists only in the quality of stitches one produces), to learn to cook well, and to participate in sports. In other words, the purpose of such education is functional preparation for a future within NS boundaries for women.

D. Historical and Everyday Role Models

Models of historical women were also a crucial component of readers in the sense that they lent a framework of the 'greater tradition' into which girls in Nazi Germany were expected to fit. Gilmer Blackburn describes three main historical figures who are given prominence in NS educational materials. The first of these is the Germanic woman of ancient times, who guarded the sacred flame which provided light and warmth for the home. Her other tasks included grinding corn, baking, making pottery, spinning wool and flax, and weaving articles of clothing. The second model given prominence in children's texts is Empress Maria Theresia of Austria (1717-80) – a woman at odds with the silent, passive, and weak woman normally praised by Nazi officials. Blackburn notes that her "spirited defense of the realm in the face of an unprecedented threat from Frederick II of Prussia" is recounted "with enthusiasm" by Nazi authors, who went on to portray her as fully capable of handling the affairs of state, and as one whose heroic

²²²Unknown Author, "Ausgerechnet Lehrerin," *Hilf mit!* August: 1938: 328. Note: "With the exception of the pedagogical institute in Hanover, the Nazis abolished teacher education for women." See Blackburn 108.

death was detailed even in a *Klasse-1* reader.²²³ She is rivaled in school texts only by a third historical figure, Queen Louise of Prussia (1776-1810). As the wife of Friedrich William III (1770-1840), Queen Louise is portrayed as a defiant yet romantic, feminine ideal in the face of the Napoleonic humiliations (1805 and 1806) faced by her country. Her fierce loyalty to her country even at the peace negotiations in Tilsit is lavishly described by Nazi authors, as is her admonishment of her sons to 'Come back with shields or on them!' prior to their departure for the Wars of Liberation (1813-14). In other words, "The lesson should not have been lost upon German students that the honor of Prussia was defended by a woman"²²⁴ – the same honor that twentieth-century German women were expected to defend, particularly during times of war.

Naturally, the three key historical examples of female models Blackburn discusses are not the only ones to be found in school materials. It was also essential for NS authors to provide girls with texts containing more realistic models of ideal women, rather than simply those from Germanic times or royal houses. For example, the short text "Am Postschalter" centers around a certain Frau Schattke, whose husband was called up to serve Germany in the year 1915. For two years, Frau Schattke has filled her husband's position as Postal Secretary while raising three children – a situation not uncommon at the time. Their eldest son, Siegfried, volunteered for duty, and so Frau Schattke must bear the emotional weight of one having two loved ones away in addition to filling a 'man's job' and keeping her home in order. One day she receives two letters herself – one is Siegfried's excited announcement that he is finally going to the front;

²²³Blackburn 109-10.

²²⁴Blackburn 109-110.

the other is a notice of her husband's death. Frau Schattke must bravely tell her children of their father's death, and, knowing that a widow's pension could hardly feed the two remaining children and herself, much less send Siegfried a package now and then, she returns to the post office to carry on in her deceased husband's stead.²²⁵ Though short, this story typifies the womanly qualities deemed both natural and essential under Nazi leadership – Frau Schattke willingly takes up where her husband leaves off in service to her community and country, she single-handedly continues to raise her children and to maintain her household, she puts up no fuss when her eldest son volunteers for active duty, and she quickly overcomes her broken heart to carry on providing for her young ones.

Yet another example is found in the short story "Der Chef von vierzehn Jahren." The story opens with the steel manufacturer Friedrich Alfred Krupp lying on his deathbed in 1826 – he dies, leaving his wife with the confession: "Ich habe die Fabrik an den Abgrund gebracht und – und lasse dich und die Kinder nun im Elend zurück."²²⁶ Frau Krupp is determined that her children not starve despite her husband's poor management, yet options are limited. Alfred, her fourteen-year-old son, realizes the crisis his mother faces, and suggests that he take over the company with her at his side. Faced with the plea, "Mutter, du mußt mir helfen!" Frau Krupp comes to the following conclusion: "Wenn ich dem Jungen helfe, wenn ich seine Schultern stark mache, die Last zu tragen, die der Tod des Vaters riesengroß daraufgelegt hat, dann wird er durchhalten, dann werden wir durchhalten, und Friedrichs verzweifelter Wort, das er mir

²²⁵W. Fr. Könitzer, "Am Postschalter," *Hilf mit!* May 1938: 235.

²²⁶W. Fr. Könitzer, "Der Chef von vierzehn Jahren," *Hilf mit!* May 1938: 236.

vor seinem Tod sagte, wird nicht in Erfüllung gehen."²²⁷ She agrees to partner with her son, and the story concludes as follows:

Die Mutter wußte an dem Abend, an dem sie ihrem Jungen Hilfe versprach, daß sie um den Toten keine Träne mehr weinen dürfe, weil der Lebende und sein Werk sie verlangten. Darum strich sie ihm auch nicht, wie man einem Kinde tut, über die Haare, sondern reichte ihm die Hand, wie man sie einem Kameraden gibt. Das hieß: "Ich glaube an dich, Junge!" In solchem Glauben gelang das Werk.²²⁸

Though implications for boys can certainly be drawn from such a story, it is also important to note that the female protagonist devotes love and care to her children, and her desire to provide for her children despite difficult circumstances ultimately results in a hopeful future. Considering that Krupp became a family name most closely associated with highly successful steel production, one could infer that the mother is responsible for the general outcome of her family, including future generations – a model that Könitzer no doubt hoped to impress on the girls who would read the text.

A final example of a text for children that incorporates a historically significant figure is entitled "Gespräch am Morgen." The unnamed mother rises at five o'clock to prepare breakfast for her family, as she does every day. While the house is still, she pauses for only a moment to rest against the kitchen table. Her son Heini is the first to rise, and, being concerned that he has not slept enough, she says, "Du solltest länger schlafen. Du hast doch noch Zeit. Und die Arbeit ist hart. Bist du denn nicht müde?"²²⁹

²²⁷ Könitzer, "Der Chef" 236.

²²⁸ Könitzer, "Der Chef" 236.

²²⁹ W. Fr. Könitzer, "Gespräch am Morgen," *Hilf mit!* May 1938: 235.

Having assured her that he is not, Heini proceeds to point out that she is already up, and her work is harder than that of anyone else in the family – she is the first to rise and the last to sleep every night. Rather than concede, she brushes her son's concern off with the words: “Ich bin es gewöhnt, Junge. So ist mein Leben. Als ich den Vater heiratete, da wußte ich, daß ich immer für ihn sorgen müsse. Und als ihr kamt, einer nach dem andern, sieben Kinder, da wußte ich, daß mein Leben hingehen würde in der Sorge um euch alle. Für eine Mutter gibt es keine andere Sorge, Heini, als die für Mann und Kinder.”²³⁰ Their discussion turns to Heini's desire to read books and write poetry rather than do manual labor with his father and brothers. The mother, though initially against his wishes for the simple reason that she knows he requires an income, has a change of heart when her son expresses his desire not to write about the moon at night or the songs of birds, but to write about the sounds of machinery and the hammer. The story ends with the mother's conclusion that he must write poetry just as she must provide for the family, followed by a note that little Heini grew up into Heinrich Lersch (1889-1936), whose poetry became famous for its nationalistic tones and portrayal of work in heavy industry. Though not precisely in the same category as Krupp steel, this brief story nonetheless also points toward the mother figure as the one responsible for her children's outcome in life. By playing on historical figures to drive home this point – along with indications that a woman is responsible for defending her nation's honor in addition to her giving birth and managing a home, as outlined by Blackburn – girls were supplied with a strong framework into which they were expected to fit. That the historical figures presented in NS reading materials for children were limited and

²³⁰Könitzer, “Gespräch” 235.

miraculously all fit into the NS-prescribed norm for women was not up for discussion. Instead, the limited variation in female historical figures allowed the Nazis to present history and the way in which women contributed to it in a way that suited their aim of limiting women to one type under their regime.

E. Motherhood and the Nation

A further method by which girls were indoctrinated into a life of motherhood and the private sphere was to hold them accountable for the nation's lifeblood. The continuity of the *Volksgemeinschaft* was of singular importance to the Nazis – without it, all of their theories on race would be undercut, thereby defeating the purpose of Nazism. Embedding a sense of accountability for the nation's future in the minds of girls required a careful selection of appropriate texts. One example of such a text is found in a poem by Herybert Menzel (1906–45), entitled “Unseren Müttern.” This poem is written from the perspective of soldiers marching into battle, who, as the following verse renders, admire their mothers' loyalty to and love for Germany:

Mütter, in eueren Augen
Sah'n wir die Liebe zum Land,
Mütter, ihr gabt sie uns weiter,
Und sie hat weitergebrannt.²³¹

It is interesting to note that it is the mothers who first loved their country and who passed that love onto the next generation. The poem's ending, however, is even more significant:

Mütter, ein Deutschland wird werden,
Gläubig, trutzig und hart!

²³¹Herybert Menzel, “Unseren Müttern,” *Hilf mit!* May 1938: 228.

Mütter, das ewige Deutschland,
Weil ihr unsre Mütter war't.²³²

Though a love of one's country is evidently meaningful in this piece, it is the continuity of the nation's lifeblood that is considered most important. It is mothers who ensure the development and stability of the 'eternal Germany' – a claim that left girls with a high level of future responsibility.

The notion that the mother is accountable for the continuation of her people and nation is also illustrated in other texts. A prime example is found in the May 1937 issue of the school magazine *Hilf mit!*, which contains a collection of poems in honor of Mother's Day under the heading "Mütter sind Heimat." Included in the selections is a verse by Otto Paust, in whose poem "Mutter ist Heimat" one reads:

Mütter! Aus eurem schützenden Schoß
wächst Deutschlands Leben – wird Deutschland groß.
Mütter! An eurer helfenden Hand
findet das Volk ins Wunderland
Heimat.²³³

This example creates an immediate association between the mother figure and Germany by collating *Heimat* with *Mutter* even in the title. Though short, this poem clearly places the responsibility for the life of the nation on mothers, but, more importantly in this particular example, mothers are cast in the role of protectors of ("Aus eurem schützenden Schoß") and helpers for ("An eurer helfenden Hand") Germany's growth and expansion.

Short stories were also laden with the motif of the mother as the source of the nation's blood. For instance, the short story "Deutsche Mutter in fremdem Land" tells of

²³²Menzel 228.

²³³Otto Paust, "Mutter ist Heimat," *Hilf mit!* May 1937: 228.

a German farmer on his way home after a day's work on the collective farm. As part of the German minority in Russia, he is plagued with the same hunger as any Russian during harsh times, and, having a chunk of bread with him, he is tempted to taste a piece before reaching his wife and two children. His wife is so weak from starvation that she is bedridden most of the time, and can provide her family only with a bit of thin soup each day. On this particular day, the farmer reaches the crossroads near his home and notices a little girl by the side of the road. The girl cries for her mother, and the farmer realizes that she is from another German colony. Her physical appearance is surprisingly neat, considering the times: "Die Haare sind zu sauberen kleinen Zöpfen geflochten, und das Kleid und der Mantel, der anscheinend aus einer alten Frauenjacke genäht wurde, sehen geflickt und ordentlich aus."²³⁴ Realising that the girl is next to her mother's corpse, the farmer attempts to comfort her, and offers her some of the bread he is taking home. Astonished, the farmer inquires as to why she is not hungry, only to learn that her mother had fed her some dried fish earlier that day. All too aware of the starvation rampant in the area, the farmer asks her what she will do if she is hungry the next day, as she saved none of the fish. The girl responds, "O, Mutter hat immer ein bißchen zum Essen da."²³⁵ Knowing that the mother's body bears all the signs of starvation, the farmer asks, "Hat sie selber denn auch oft gegessen?", to which the girl replies, "Mutter – nein, Mutter hat niemals Hunger."²³⁶ The story then ends with the following scene:

²³⁴Erika Müller-Hennig, "Deutsche Mutter in fremdem Land," *Ewiges Deutschland. Deutsches Lesebuch für höhere Schulen. Mädchenausgabe*, eds. A. Caselmann, A. Lämmermeyr, E. Puchtler, *erster Band*, 4. Auflage (Bamberg: C. C. Buchner, 1943) 130.

²³⁵Müller-Hennig 130.

²³⁶Müller-Hennig 131.

"Und schweigend beugt der Bauer seinen Kopf vor dieser deutschen Mutter, die niemals Hunger hatte – obwohl sie am Hunger starb."²³⁷

It is interesting to note that this story does not blatantly state that a mother was responsible for the continuity of the *Volksgemeinschaft*. Instead, her self-sacrifice is stressed as the most important characteristic, since this self-sacrifice permits the next generation to go on against all odds. Not only does she give her daughter whatever food she finds without retaining any for herself, but she even took the care of keeping her daughter clean and neatly dressed in a time of desperation, creating a strong image of sacrificial love and provision considered so noble in Nazi Germany.

F. Defining the Ideal Mother

A final method by which Nazi leaders sought to socialize girls into remaining in the private sphere was to promote motherhood as being above any other task for females. By creating a prominent image of it in texts, girls could be directed into accepting it as not simply their 'natural' future, as earlier discussed, but as their 'ideal' future. What girls were not told was that the Nazi notion of motherhood they were expected to willingly embrace was in fact nothing more than an unfounded ideology, as the following aptly demonstrates:

Das Bild der Frau und Mutter war, wie bekannt, während der Herrschaft des Nationalsozialismus ganz besonders dem ideologischen Zugriff ausgesetzt. Die Frau wurde systematisch von den geistigen Berufen und Aufgaben ferngehalten, was sich eindeutig in den einschränkenden

²³⁷Müller-Hennig 131.

Bestimmungen über ihre Zulassung zum Abitur und zum Studium dokumentiert. Die Frau sollte als Mutter ganz dem häuslichen Wirkungskreis und der Familie zugeordnet werden. "Der Nationalsozialismus hat uns gelehrt", schreibt Franz Kade, "daß das Weib als Hüterin der Reinheit des deutschen Blutes eine große Verantwortung trägt." Diese Aufgaben entsprächen dem Wesen der Frau am besten.²³⁸ Was allerdings das Wesen Frau ist, wird nicht empirisch-psychologisch ermittelt, sondern von den nationalsozialistischen Ideologen festgelegt.²³⁸

Thus the ideal woman was – according to the assumptions of NS ideologists – first and foremost a mother, but what is interesting is that within the ideal female role (i.e. motherhood), there was more specifically an ideal mother. The question remains as to precisely what this ideal National Socialist mother figure – again, as ordained by NS ideologists – entailed, and how school readers played a crucial part in creating and maintaining an image of the mother that reflected this ideal for girls.

In order to better understand how school readers created and maintained a 'politically correct' image of motherhood, it is important to explore how NS-ideologists responsible for reader content created a definition of motherhood that suited their aims. Linguist J.R. Firth states that "the complete meaning of a word is always contextual."²³⁹ Based upon this assertion, one can infer that in the case of NS school readers, texts containing the key terms *mother* or *motherhood* would do so within a context that lent itself to the goals of furthering the *Volksgemeinschaft* and confining women to the

²³⁸Hasubek 55.

²³⁹J.R. Firth, "The Technique of Semantics," *Papers In Linguistics 1934-1951*, ed. J.R. Firth (London: Oxford University Press, 1957) 7.

private sphere. In order to achieve the desired context, it is ultimately the descriptors used in conjunction with any given key term that result in an association, as the following example with regard to the key term 'black' indicates:

If the semantic prosody of *black* is negative, as its tendency to occur in expressions like *black magic*, *black Wednesday*, *the black sheep of the family* and so on suggests, then this prosody may spill over onto the person referred to in expressions like *black man/woman/boy/girl*. This particular phenomenon was actively combated through the "Black is Beautiful" slogan used by campaigners for racial equality in the 1970s and 1980s – a slogan which itself manipulates collocation and whose success testifies to the effectiveness of such manipulation. Through frequent collocation with the positively loaded term *beautiful*, any negative connotations of *black* are overridden.²⁴⁰

This concept of collocation can be summarized as "the tendency of certain words in spoken and written texts to appear in the vicinity of certain other words."²⁴¹ Though one may initially consider this notion inconsequential, its significance lies in the fact that intentional or even unintentional collocation of nodes (key terms or expressions) with certain collates (words surrounding the node) "allows writers, without explicit statement, to encourage certain reader reactions to characters and phenomena in the fictional worlds of realistic novels, and it allows them, further, to encourage associations between phenomena in the fictional world and those of the readers' extra-literary

²⁴⁰ Knowles and Malmkjær 70.

²⁴¹ Knowles and Malmkjær 69.

experience.²⁴² In the case of Nazi Germany, school readers comprised the perfect medium in which texts with relevant collocations of the term *mother* or *motherhood* could create an ideologically-appropriate definition of the mother – a definition that would ideally be acted out by girls in nonliterary contexts as well.

Far from simply being a matter of physically being a mother, girls were presented with a very specific set of 'female' characteristics that they, as future mothers themselves, could be expected to exhibit. Peter Hasubek notes that, while the ideal father was to be characterized by his strength, helpfulness, reliability, and selflessness when found in situations threatening the lives of his children, the ideal mother was to be characterized by her homey warmth, her protectiveness, her quietness, and her provision for her family.²⁴³ Her inherent goodness, peace, love, and willingness to sacrifice and bring comfort to others permeate texts found in National Socialist readers, to the exclusion of any remotely negative or selfish traits.

The extent to which this idealization was carried can be seen in poems such as Baldur von Schirach's "Meiner Mutter," which opens with the rhyme "Wenn etwas Gutes in mir ist, / Dann weil du meine Mutter bist."²⁴⁴ It is also made apparent in Heinrich Lersch's "Bildnis der Mutter," in which he describes his own mother as a small, plainly dressed woman with seven children. She rose every day at five o'clock to bake fresh bread and prepare coffee, and then stood between the table and stove while the rest of her family ate. Lersch's idealization of his mother knows no bounds.

²⁴²Knowles and Malmkjær 70-71.

²⁴³Hasubek 54.

²⁴⁴Baldur von Schirach, "Meiner Mutter," *Hilf mit!* May 1938: 288.

Sentences such as "Sie leitete uns mit der magischen Gewalt ihrer Augen"²⁴⁵ add to the picture, making her almost unearthly in her perfection. Even her language reflects the exemplary mother: "Solche durchtönende Kraft, Zauber und Macht ging von Mutters Sprache aus, daß wir nicht nur gebändigt gehorsam, sondern in uns gestillt und beruhigt wurden. Mit dem einzigen Wort 'Kinder!' – in vielfältiger Betonung, aber immer gütig und mild – hat Mutter uns erzogen."²⁴⁶ By using such texts in school readers, the 'ideal' mother – in addition to being associated with the more practical aspects of life in the private sphere – emulates characteristics at odds with those found in the public sphere, thereby increasing the distinction between 'male' and 'female' roles.

A second example of a short text which aptly illustrates the type of mother NS-ideologists hoped girls would one day emulate is as follows:

Muttersorgen.

Mütterlein, lieb Mütterlein,
wie mußt du doch immerfort fleißig sein!
Wenn wir noch schlafen, am frühesten Morgen,
mußt du dich schon plagen, mußt du dich schon sorgen,

daß wir auch beizeiten den Kaffee kriegen,
daß wir nicht zu lang' in den Federn liegen,
daß wir nicht etwa die Schule verpassen,
auch Frühstücksbrot haben, nichts liegenlassen.

Dann mußt du fegen und putzen und klopfen,
mußt scheuern und flicken und bürsten und stopfen.
Die Wäsche darfst du auch nicht vergessen
und die Blumen, den Vogel, das Mittagessen.

So geht es immer, tagaus, tagein,
oft bis in die späte Nacht hinein;

²⁴⁵Heinrich Lersch, "Bildnis der Mutter," *Ewiges Deutschland. Ein deutsches Hausbuch*, ed. Winterhilfswerk des Deutschen Volkes (Braunschweig: Georg Westermann, 1939) 47.

²⁴⁶Lersch 46.

so geht es weiter, jahrein, jahraus. –
Sag, Mutter, wann ruhst du dich endlich aus?²⁴⁷

Beginning with the title, it is clear that the term *Mutter* is to be closely connected with *Sorgen*, denoting care and provision. This particular mother has not only given birth to children, but is a model of homemaking excellence and family care giving. She is meticulously *fleißig*, leaving nothing undone – an image largely generated by the use of many verbs, which produce a picture of incessant activity. While everyone else sleeps, she is already hard at work, ensuring that the coffee is brewed, that breakfast is ready, that no one oversleeps, that the children are promptly sent on their way to school. All of this precedes a day's work spent doing everything from cleaning and mending to feeding the bird and watering the flowers – tasks that often keep her up late at night. After all of the active descriptors that characterize this woman, the rhetorical question with which the poem ends sounds idiotic – it is quite obvious that the poor woman never rests. Yet what is made specifically obvious in this text is that the ideal mother is far more than just a physical mother – she is the sole operator of the private sphere.

This particular image of motherhood is by far the predominant one throughout readers. The significance of this lies in the fact that, as mentioned earlier, the Nazis required a uniform definition for motherhood – by presenting an unvarying model, there could be no doubt as to what the Nazi definition of the 'ideal' woman was. Even though this definition was often implicit, as in the above example, the extent to which NS-ideologists went to create this image was by no means always indirect. For example,

²⁴⁷ Artur Schoke, "Muttersorgen," *Deutsches Lesebuch für Volksschulen 3. und 4. Jahr*, ed. NS-Lehrerbund (München: Rösel-Pustet, 1938) 12-13.

in an untitled text by Georg Stammer (1872-1948) the female reader is told in no uncertain terms what she should live up to:

Mutter – das ist Gegenwart und Sorge und Fleiß und ewige stille, dienende Handreichung des Nächsten. Und doch tausendmal mehr als das, denn es ist das alles von Adel erfüllt und von Lieblichkeit durchgossen.

Mutter – so voll Güte, Hoheit und unauslöschlichen Schenkens ist dies Wort! Es ist Speise und Trank und Aufatmen, ist die sichere, tragende Heimat der Seele.

Nein! Wo nur Leib geboren hat, das nenne ich nicht Mutter. Nur die als Wirkerin in ihrem Volke steht, die die segnende Macht der Ewigkeit durch Hände und Leib und Herz leitet, nur die sei uns dieses Namens wert.²⁴⁸

By consistently defining motherhood in terms such as these, the Nazis were able to propagate one (idealized) side of a woman's existence that suited the state's interest. The good home she runs and the nurturing qualities she never fails to display created an illusion of an idyllic private sphere, and therefore a fictitious haven that would supposedly shield a family from the rest of the National Socialist reality. A striking feature of these texts is their redundancy – the mother figure is continually presented within a context of family, home life, and goodness. The reason for the limited variation

²⁴⁸Georg Stammer, Untitled, *Ewiges Deutschland. Ein deutsches Hausbuch*, ed. Winterhilfswerk des Deutschen Volkes (Braunschweig: Georg Westermann, 1939) 49.

from text to text on motherhood, or any other theme central to NS ideology, has been summarized as follows:

German fascist discourse was governed by an operational rationality; its aim was to produce monolithic solidarity which did not permit deviations or alternatives within its framework. The need was for a defined discourse with which people could identify, and such a need can, ultimately, only be met by standardised and static texts which clearly defined roles and rituals.²⁴⁹

The need for mass identification with a single *Weltanschauung* was high on Hitler's priority list. Assuming that the majority of people were unable to process more than one idea at a time (or possibly out of fear that they were fully able to do just that), the NS leader provided the following grounds for repetition in propaganda:

The great masses' receptive ability is only very limited, their understanding is small, but their forgetfulness is great. As a consequence of these facts, all effective propaganda has to limit itself only to a very few points and to use them like slogans until even the very last man is able to imagine what is intended by such a word. As soon as one sacrifices this basic principle and tries to become versatile, the effect will fritter away, as the masses are neither able to digest the material offered nor to retain it. Thus the result is weakened and finally eliminated.²⁵⁰

²⁴⁹Michael Townson, *Mother-tongue and fatherland. Language and politics in German* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992) 132.

²⁵⁰Hitler 234.

Thus the tendency of the term *Mutter* to co-occur with the same descriptors in text after text is neither surprising, nor was it without purpose. Hitler made it clear that

Propaganda's task is [...] not to evaluate the various rights, but far more to stress exclusively the one that is to be represented by it. It has not to search into truth as far as this is favorable to others, in order to present it then to the masses with doctrinary honesty, but it has rather to serve its own truth uninterruptedly.²⁵¹

And so, whether the meaning of *Mutter* or any other key term as presented in NS texts was the 'correct' one, or even the best one, was not the point. Instead, the notion of having girls accept a role as 'ideal' mothers in an 'ideal' private sphere had to remain at the forefront when selecting texts for use in school reading materials.

²⁵¹Hitler 236.

VI. Women in Postwar Germany

The attempt by National Socialist ideologists to use education materials for the purpose of socializing girls into becoming 'ideal' women was, as this study has demonstrated, not halfheartedly carried out. By striving to make a life in the private sphere appear 'natural,' by providing both age-relevant and historical models of 'ideal' women, by making mothers appear accountable for the nation's future, and by creating their own definition of the 'ideal' mother in texts selected for use in *NS* readers, it is clear that the Nazis placed great faith in the use of literature as a highly effective socializing agent. However, the question remains as to whether their attempt was successful. Evidence such as a brief essay by a fourteen-year-old girl entitled "Die deutsche Mutter als Schicksalsgestalterin,"²⁵² in which the young author recounts the hard work and sacrifice of the mothers of Germany's leaders, past and present, and the efforts also made by the average mother during times of war, would suggest that Nazi ideologists saw some success. Yet to make any gross claims of success based upon an example such as this would be pure speculation – the fact that Nazism was toppled before any measurable results could be seen can only leave one guessing. Thus answers to questions as to how one could measure the success would be difficult to establish. Had the National Socialists remained in power, birth rates may have shown whether women who attended schools in which *NS* readers were used produced children, yet whether they 'measured up' to the standards set forth in readers for the 'ideal' woman's character and her ability to operate single-handedly in the private sphere are elements of life that can never be accurately determined. Furthermore, as Michael Townson argues, the fascists sought a

²⁵²Unknown author, "Die deutsche Mutter als Schicksalsgestalterin," *Erziehung zur Volksgemeinschaft. Ein neuer Weg*, ed. Reichswaltung des NS.-Lehrerbundes (Berlin-Tempelhof: H.A. Braun, n.d.) 156.

standardized discourse (including a standardized discourse on women) as a means to a standard world-view, but several major factors have to be considered, including the "effectiveness of the regulatory mechanism and the willingness of the producers of text," the lack of control over both levels of commitment to fascism and private discourse, and the monotony of texts – all of which mitigated against the acceptance of one, state-approved discourse.²⁵³ There is also the issue of reader response to consider. In regard to literary texts, "*observed response to literature is not equivalent to internal experience of literature.*"²⁵⁴ In other words, whether girls ultimately accepted and unconditionally agreed with what they read can never be established. It is also essential to note that, as with any theme found in school readers, the propagation of motherhood was in part dependent upon a mediator – the teacher. It has been noted that "text-as-mediated is the crucial variable more often than text in itself."²⁵⁵ In the case of Nazi Germany too, "Teaching became a manipulative process."²⁵⁶ This was largely due to the fact that teachers were, in no uncertain terms, not only to facilitate pupils' learning, but also to be political leaders, thereby fulfilling "ein uraltes pädagogisches Prinzip, das nur nicht mehr in eine lebensfremde und volksferne Gelehrsamkeit, sondern in den gegenwärtigen politischen Aktivismus ausmündet."²⁵⁷ Whether they did so successfully or not is difficult to estimate.

What *can* be established as having occurred after 1945 is of an interesting nature.

Gilmer Blackburn points out that "the experience after 1945 suggests that the campaign

²⁵³Townson 145, 148, 149.

²⁵⁴Hugh Crago, "The Roots of Response," *Children's Literature. The development of criticism*, ed. Peter Hunt (London and New York: Routledge, 1990) 121.

²⁵⁵Crago 128.

²⁵⁶Pine, *Dissemination* 96.

²⁵⁷*Erziehung* 16.

to reinforce the character of German womanhood through education died in the ashes of defeat as completely as did the regime's expansionist dreams.²⁵⁸ In addition, boys and girls in coed schools began to receive an equal education following the war's end, with the exception of a division in optional subjects.²⁵⁹ However, Ute Frevert notes that "despite the declared intention of the Federal Republic not to carry on Nazi traditions, the *F-Abitur*, the 'women's *Abitur*', was still being passed in many girls' schools in the 1960s."²⁶⁰ Furthermore, "das Bild der Mutter in den Lesebüchern nach 1945 [ist] stark wirklichkeitsfremd."²⁶¹ Such assertions indicate that the steps taken by the National Socialists to ensure a woman stayed in the private sphere and to portray an 'ideal' woman in school texts were not easily erased. Naturally, as seen after the First World War, the attempt by men to reintegrate themselves into the public sphere following the war's end would have contributed to the perpetuation of a distinct 'female' sphere. What was altered was the argument that remaining in the private sphere fulfilled a woman's duty to the *Volksgemeinschaft*. In its place developed the assertion that women could bring order and stability to the chaotic postwar years. This notion was fueled, in part, by recurring images of mourning women in postwar newspapers, magazines, and war memorials, many of which suggest that "women stand at the margins of history as observers."²⁶² Many German women did not see themselves as

²⁵⁸Blackburn 114.

²⁵⁹See Hettwer for details.

²⁶⁰Frevert 317.

²⁶¹Hasubek 55.

²⁶²Mariatte Denman, "Visualizing the Nation. Madonnas and Mourning Mothers in Postwar Germany," *Gender and Germanness. Cultural Productions of Nation*, eds. Patricia Herminghouse and Magda Mueller (Providence and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 1997) 197. See Denman for details of the debate surrounding Käthe Kollwitz's 1937 sculpture *Mutter mit totem Sohn* in the *Neue Wache* and other artistic representations of mothers in postwar Germany.

active participants in National Socialism, but continued to view themselves as guardians of virtue and homelife come the war's end. One such woman was Gertrud Bäumer, (1873-1954). Famed for her publications on womanhood in the Third Reich and her involvement with the *Bund Deutscher Frauen*, Bäumer did not alter her idealization of a separate sphere for women following Germany's defeat. Instead, she argued that "because of women's specific inclination toward higher values and their innate difference from men, the 'motherly woman' has a particular role to play in the reconstruction of the German family."²⁶³ Such an assertion demonstrates that although a shift from motherhood for the sake of the *NS Volksgemeinschaft* to motherhood as a source of healing for the nation took place, the *idealization* of motherhood transcended political change. As Roland Barthes argues, "myths are not perceived as historically constructed cultural narratives, but as eternal, permanent, and untainted by ideology or history."²⁶⁴ In the context of this study, the myth of the 'ideal mother' aptly demonstrates Barthes' view. Had motherhood been perceived as a 'historically constructed cultural narrative' of National Socialism, it is doubtful that the mother would have come to symbolize stability, identification, and national healing following the Second World War. Instead, National Socialism was simply eliminated from the discourse, and the image of the 'ideal' woman prevailed. The Nazis were fanatical about creating a single image of the 'ideal' woman, yet it is apparent that the desire to maintain an obsolete model did not die at the war's end.

²⁶³Denman 197.

²⁶⁴Roland Barthes, *Mythologies*, trans. Annette Lavers (London: Vintage, 1993) 142. See also: Denman 199.

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